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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

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Caught!

Now we know what the mark of Cain must have looked like. It was a tuft of black atop the wild white hair of a wandering old killer who called himself a healer. The benign disguise of Radovan Karadžić should have surprised nobody. His cunning in the concealment of his malignity was abundantly proven in the years when he was the architect of the Bosnian genocide. He fooled the leaders of the West—Clinton, Christopher, Lake, Vance, Carter, Carrington, Owen, Rifkind, Hurd, and of course Boutros Ghali and Annan—long enough to destroy more than 200,000 men, women, and children. They met with Cain, they shook his hand, they heard him out, they gave him what he needed most for his evil—time; and until they stopped him, they did not stop him.

It was fitting, in a way, that Karadžić eluded capture for so long: the world in which he perpetrated his horrors—a hot country, a cold world—was never especially outraged by him. The Americans finally acted against him when CNN and the bizarre terms of the U.N. deployment in Bosnia made it impossible for them not to act; and the Serbs finally arrested him when his arrest became a condition of Serbia's admittance into the European Union. (For ten years, his mark notwithstanding, Cain enjoyed the protection of his community and his church.) The denouement of the Balkan disaster has always been a spectacle of the right thing ingloriously done. It was not high principle that brought Karadžić down—not then, not now. For this reason, the joy that we feel at his apprehension is rather a shadowed joy. His indictment and his conviction before an international tribunal will certainly stand as a milestone in the campaign against genocide, and the fiend deserves whatever awaits him; but somehow it is too late, and too bitter, to call this justice. Justice, strictly understood, must come before genocide, not after genocide.

Cain, of course, conceded that it was his brother that he murdered. But it was Radovan Karadžić's special contribution to the Serbian crime to repudiate the possibility of brotherhood across national, cultural, religious, and even biological lines. He provided death's theory. He, the poet and the psychiatrist, was a master de-humanizer. It is said that Karadžić even devised the phrase "ethnic cleansing." In 1991, he proclaimed that the Muslim community of Bosnia would "disappear from the face of the earth" and foresaw "the beginning of the end of their existence as a nation." He justified the sadism of the siege of Sarajevo this way: "Never hold a snake by the tail, but by the neck." In 1995, he gave this order to the Bosnian Serb forces under the command of Ratko Mladic, who is still sipping tea somewhere in Serbia: "By planned and well-thought-out combat operations, create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Zepa." The obscenity that followed is well-known. "Srebrenica" is now one of those words, like "Guernica" and "Lidice," that are Western scars. To see it again in the newspapers last week was to have one's sense of darkness refreshed.

KARADZIC: SIPAPHOTOS/NEWSCOM; BACKGROUND: NIKOLA SOLIC/REUTERS/LANDOV

And not a moment too soon. For the capture of Radovan Karadžić is an event with implications not only about the past. Here is Ben Kiernan, in his fine history of genocide: "A year after the publication of the Serbian Memorandum [the xenophobic manifesto of Serbian intellectuals that provided the ideological foundations for the Bosnian genocide], in October 1987, a group from the Darfur region of western Sudan, calling itself the Committee of the Arab Gathering, sent a similar letter of ethnic complaint to the Sudanese prime minister in Khartoum." Karadžić, in other words, is a man of his time. In this era of genocide, there is nothing anachronistic about him. Even as he was hunted down for his indictment for crimes against humanity, the International Criminal Court at the Hague was indicting Omar Al Bashir, the president of Sudan, on similar charges for the atrocities in Darfur. Two days after Karadžić was finally apprehended, his African counterpart—Cain's other brother, the one not unlike him—embarked on a triumphal tour of his country, dancing jigs on the roofs of trucks before smiling crowds. The crime, the philosophy, and the defiance are the same. So is the challenge to us, and to what we profess to believe.

"Will we give meaning to the words 'never again' in Darfur?" Barack Obama asked, as he ticked off the ills of the world in his speech in Berlin. Uh-huh. Sure we will. Yes, we can. But

Anastasia Vasilakis

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only if we are willing to use our power—not our soft power, but our hard power. The use of military force by the United States and NATO in the Balkans—belatedly in Bosnia but promptly in Kosovo—remains the only model for an effective response to the extermination of peoples.

Whatever one thinks of the war in Iraq, it is impossible to deny that it has had the effect of delegitimating "humanitarian intervention" for a new generation. This new diffidence must be resisted. It is what the mass murderers and the mass rapists are counting on. You cannot be against the genocide in Darfur and against the use of force to end it. Otherwise your opposition to the atrocity is purely gestural, and merely a display of your admiring sense of yourself. It makes no sense to be opposed to a problem and to its solution. So it is good that the butcher of Bosnia has met his day; but the real way to capture Radovan Karadžić is to capture Omar Al Bashir.

The Weird Persistence of John McCain

Last week, for the first time in our history, we had an African American president. Barack Obama posed for pictures with Angela Merkel and toured the skies of Iraq with David Petraeus. Meanwhile, George W. Bush was nowhere to be seen, as if he had already handed over the keys to the White House.

Savor the moment. It might not last.

Despite the ecstatic throngs in Berlin and the impeccable Sderot photo-op, Obama's lead hasn't grown in the polls. In fact, as of this writing, it has actually diminished in some polls of Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota—and evaporated in Colorado. National polls show McCain hanging within a stunningly small margin. (According to pollster.com's average of all polling, he leads by just 2.5 percent.) What makes this margin so stunning is that nothing has gone right for McCain this past month. Obama has owned the news cycle—a fact that has turned McCain and his advisers into contemptuous whiners, complaining about the media's infatuation with Obama and even belittling their own travelling press corps as the "junior varsity" squad.

But, in truth, McCain should be happy that Obama has so dominated the airwaves and front page for these past weeks. These days, McCain's every utterance about foreign policy seems to arrive packaged in an embarrassing slip (sorry, Senator, Pakistan doesn't border Iraq); his crowds are paltry, and his campaign's stage-managing of events (see the cheese-aisle press conference) is downright, well, JV.

Yet, somehow, despite all this, McCain remains in the game. This is not easy to explain—and it should cause a great deal of introspection at Obama headquarters. For all the many ways that the stars have aligned for Obama, he has yet to take full advantage of what historically has been a great opportunity. Of course, we speak of the economy. These are the type of painful times when voters invariably turn to Democrats. So why aren't they turning to Obama in greater numbers?

If you journey to Obama's website, you'll find a slew of terrific policy proposals to fix financial markets and salve the worst blows of the downturn. But if you watch his ads and listen to his speeches, you'll struggle to hear him articulate a consistent narrative for our economics woes. His campaign has been notably devoid of the populist criticism of Al Gore's 2000 campaign—which is a shame, because there are corporations and banks well deserving of opprobrium just now. And, more importantly, he hasn't found a clear, compelling way to explain the contours of this current crisis—how it reflects structural changes and manifests itself in peoples' lives—a prerequisite for building faith in his capacity to solve it. The model should be Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign, which didn't just relentlessly harp on hard times—it had a clear theory for what caused them. In part, this is a consequence of the prolonged primary season: Obama should have been compiling his general election case many months ago, while he had to contend with Hillary Clinton. And, now, time is growing short. Just because every data point would suggest an Obama victory, doesn't mean that he won't blow it. ◆

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Eli Lake's article "Contra Expectations" (July 30) incorrectly stated that Richard Clarke issued his famous apology to the families of September 11 victims during congressional testimony. In fact, it was during testimony before the 9/11 Commission. We regret the error.

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energy technology series

1 2 3 4

vehicles of change

New technologies help our cars use less fuel — and reduce emissions.

To Nazeer Bhore, the cars and trucks we drive aren't just vehicles, they're opportunities to solve the world's energy and environmental challenges.

Bhore, 45, a married father of two who was raised in Mumbai, is an engineer at ExxonMobil. Along with other engineers and scientists across ExxonMobil's many research organizations, he helps develop the advanced vehicle and fuel technologies that will make the cars we drive more efficient.

Some of these technologies are already on the road. For example, ExxonMobil has developed lightweight plastics for car parts such as bumpers and fuel tanks. Lighter vehicles use less fuel; for every 10-percent drop in vehicle weight, fuel economy improves by seven percent.

Working with major tire manufacturers, ExxonMobil also developed a new tire-lining technology that uses up to 80 percent less material in the manufacturing process, making tires lighter and keeping them properly inflated. A car with underinflated tires burns up to an extra tank of gasoline every year.

Other innovations are still emerging. One is a new engine technology called Homogeneous Charge Compression Ignition, or HCCI, which combines the best features of gasoline- and diesel-powered engines. The result: up to 30 percent better fuel economy and lower emissions.

And we are excited to be working on a breakthrough technology that could advance the use of hydrogen fuel cells. This new technology, which will be applied first to industrial vehicles such as forklifts, converts traditional hydrocarbon fuels (such as gasoline or diesel) into hydrogen directly on board a vehicle, eliminating the need for separate facilities for producing and distributing hydrogen. Measured on a "well-to-wheels" basis, this on-vehicle hydrogen fuel system could be up to 80 percent more fuel-efficient, and emit 45 percent less carbon dioxide, than today's internal-combustion engine.

Ongoing advances in vehicle and fuel technology will be critical to meeting global demand for transportation fuels. They will also help address the risk posed by rising greenhouse-gas emissions.

Bhore's children are still young — nine and two. But he hopes that when they grow up, they will choose jobs that enable them to make a positive contribution to society — just like he did.

"With these technologies," says Bhore, "we are working on solutions that make a real difference."

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Cartoon Character

Why is the Democratic candidate always *a flip-flopper?*

JONATHAN CHAIT

Do you remember when conservatives used to speak warmly, and sometimes rapturously, about Barack Obama? That was back when they were certain that the Clinton voodoo magic would make Hillary the nominee, and Obama her sympathetic roadkill. Since then, the right has made the horrifying discoveries that Obama is, successively, a left-wing ideologue, a coddler of anti-Americanism, a wine-sipping elitist, and, now, a shameless flip-flopper. The man will say anything, discard any position, in order to win the election.

If such a tragic tarnishing of the reputation could happen to a fresh-faced reformer like Obama, it could happen to anybody. And, in fact, it has—at least to anybody who has happened to attain the Democratic presidential nomination at any point over the last five election cycles. John Kerry, as everybody remembers, came to be defined almost exclusively as a flip-flopper. (A 2004 *Wall Street Journal* news article described him as "a politician with a troublesome reputation for trying to have it both ways.")

Al Gore was relentlessly attacked by Republicans for his alleged waffling. ("Mr. Gore has a bit of a reputation for flip-flopping and corner-cutting," reported *The New York Times* in 2000.) Bill Clinton was attacked by George H.W. Bush for "turn[ing] the White House into a Waffle House" and the subject of a famous *Time* cover story titled, "Why Voters Don't Trust Bill Clinton."

It was true: Voters didn't trust Clinton—or Gore, or Kerry. In all of those elections, polls showed the Democratic nominee scoring higher on most of the issues, but the Republican nominee scoring higher on honesty and other personal qualities. Either this is because the Democratic Party keeps nominating weasels for president, time and time again, or else there's something systemic that makes Republicans (and the press) portray them as such. I'm going with explanation number two.

Here's my systemic explanation. In the late 1980s, the popular revolt against government that had bubbled up in the mid-'60s began to peter out, sapping the power of straightforward anti-government appeals. And, starting in 1992, Democrats ruthlessly purged nearly all their political liabilities by embracing anti-crime measures, welfare reform, and middle-class tax cuts, and, more recently, by abandoning gun control. What's left is a political terrain generally favorable to Democrats, which has, in turn, forced Republicans to emphasize the personal virtue of their nominees.

And so, every four years, we have a Democratic candidate campaigning on health care, the minimum wage, education, Medicare, or Social Security, and a Republican candidate campaigning on themes like Trust, Courage, and so forth. President Bush in 2004 was explicit about his elevation of character over issues: "Even when we don't agree," he would say, "at least you know what I believe and where I stand."

The details of the Republican character narrative vary a bit from campaign to campaign. (In 1992, 1996, and 2008, Republicans waxed rhapsodic about the moral virtues inherent in military service; in 2000 and 2004, they played them down.) The alleged flip-floppiness of the Democratic nominee, though, is a hardy perennial. Flip-flopping is a simple accusation that campaign reporters can sink their teeth into. Moreover, there's always grist for the accusation, because getting to the position of running for president without changing your stance on a few issues is essentially impossible.

And, so, whatever two or three issues the Democratic nominee has changed his emphasis on are inevitably blown up into a devastating character indictment. The Charles Krauthammers and Sean Hannitys of the world can be counted on to whip themselves into a moralistic frenzy against the feckless Democrat. And news reporters will stroke their chins and ponder, because the question is being asked: Just who *is* Obama (Kerry/Gore/Clinton), anyway? Yes, he may have a detailed platform on domestic and foreign policy, but do we really *know* anything about this man?

If one needs any final proof of the ridiculousness of this quadrennial exercise, it is the fact that John McCain has embraced the flip-flopper attack. John McCain! I've said this before, I'll say it again: This is a man who, in his quest to make himself an acceptable GOP nominee, reversed his political philosophy (crusading anti-business progressive in the Teddy Roosevelt mode); his political orientation (frequently siding with, and nearly joining, Senate Democrats); and almost every particular undergirding it (taxes, the Lieberman-Warner climate change bill, his own immigration bill, etc.). But if you actually think that flip-flopping is a sign of flawed character, and not just a handy partisan cudgel, then, sure, Obama might be slightly cynical, but McCain must be a dangerous sociopath.

Now, allegedly Obama can be held to a higher standard because he has loftily set himself above ordinary politicians. (McCain has, too, but never mind.) The operating theory here is that Obama represents a New Politics of the purest and most innocent sort, and to expose him as a mere politician is to destroy the very rationale of his candidacy. Obama's "flip-flopping," writes Krauthammer, proves he's "just a politician." His "dash to the center," mourns *National Review* editor Rich Lowry, "falsifies the very essence of his candidacy."

It is no doubt true that some liberal Obamaphiles interpreted his disdain for "politics as usual" as a pledge to abstain from all political maneuvering and lead a campaign of monkish purity. Those people have had their eyes opened and should not vote for Obama or, for that matter, anybody.

However, there's a more likely, and less suicidal, interpretation of the "different kind of politics" Obama has practiced. First, he uses a more elevated, professorial, and less demagogic brand of rhetoric than most politicians. Second, Obama believes in the necessity of mobilizing his supporters as a counterweight against the power of organized special interests. This belief flows from his background as a community organizer, and requires active and continued participation from his supporters.

But, yes, he's just a politician—which is to say, he's willing to make some compromises to win. And, if Obama doesn't win, the Democrats will find a new nominee in four years—a shameless flip-flopper, no doubt. ◆

TRB
From Washington

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24
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*SOURCES: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007; National Academy of Sciences, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2007; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007; Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2007.

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Punch Drunk Love

How boxing explains John McCain.

John McCain has made plenty of political enemies in his day, but among the most surprising is Eddie Goldman. The New York resident doesn't fixate on McCain's position on campaign finance, or his religious views, or his support for the Iraq war. What upsets Goldman is the way John McCain treated ultimate fighting.

Yes, ultimate fighting—that no-holds-barred hybrid of boxing, wrestling, and martial arts immortalized in the hit movie *Fight Club*. Ultimate fighting sprang up in the early 1990s with a flurry of neck chops, spleen blows, and roundhouses to the face. Goldman, a longtime sports commentator, was an early fan and evangelist; McCain was an early and vociferous critic. He condemned the sport as "human cockfighting," leaned on cable companies not to televise it, and sought to ban it nationwide. "It's an abuse of power story!" fumes Goldman. "The vehemence of McCain's position had no rational explanation."

Even less passionate observers agree that McCain was obsessed. A decade ago, *Slate* editor David Plotz interviewed McCain at his Senate office. McCain loves boxing, and Plotz politely challenged his belief in that sport's moral superiority to ultimate fighting, noting that boxers can be killed and often retire with severe brain damage. "At that point," Plotz recalls, "he said, 'If you can't see the moral distinction, then we have nothing left to talk about,'" and abruptly stalked out.

Plotz had hit a nerve: McCain's beef with ultimate fighting has its roots in a lifelong romance with boxing—and what the sweet science represents. The candidate has been a self-described boxing "fanatic" since he was a scrawny, 127-pound fighter at the Naval Academy in the mid-1950s. As a midshipman, he hid a forbidden twelve-inch black-and-white television in his room for secret viewings of Friday night fights. His boxing background, McCain told *Newsweek* last year, actually helped him survive punishment as a prisoner of war: "I knew how to take hard blows."

As a politician, McCain's passion for the sport has endured. In 2004, he paid $1,400 for a prime seat next to then–Senate Minority Whip Harry Reid at a marquee Vegas bout between Bernard Hopkins and Oscar De La Hoya. Not even the campaign has kept him away; during one swing to Nevada last year, McCain found time to see De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather Jr. at the MGM Grand. And he'll talk reporters' ears off about the sport. Aboard his campaign bus in New Hampshire last year, he held forth on the fate of the 42-year-old Hopkins who was set to battle the young challenger Winky Wright. "I don't think he's going to beat Winky Wright. He's too old," McCain said, veering dangerously off message. (McCain might happily note today that Hopkins pulled off an upset.)

Boxing is a fitting obsession for McCain. Like the 71-year-old senator himself, the sport is a cultural throwback. A civilized way, dating to Ancient Greece, for one man to prove his strength over another, boxing was the great love of McCain's idol, the manly Teddy Roosevelt, who was partially blinded by it. But it also appeals to McCain's impish side—evoking the irascible Rat Pack style of Las Vegas he finds so appealing. (McCain is an unapologetic gambler: One acquaintance of mine tells of shooting craps past midnight with McCain in Vegas several years ago; McCain even loaned the guy's wife $50 to get her started.)

In the Senate, McCain has sought to translate his love of boxing into policy. Initially, he was motivated by the grim lives of journeymen boxers, for whom he battled to win health care and pensions. "John has a real love for the sport, and it was evident," says the famed boxing

JONATHAN TWINGLEY'S AMERICA

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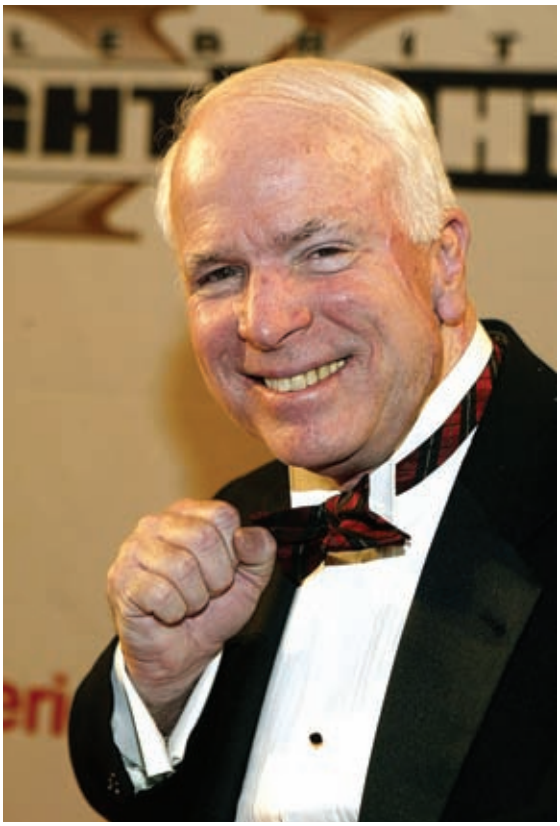
commentator Bert Sugar, between drags on a cigar. "Of all the pressing problems, boxing wasn't one of them. And, yet, he devoted his time and saw it through."

McCain was especially fixated on the fairness and integrity of the sport, leading him to denounce crooked oversight and push (thus far unsuccessfully) for a federal oversight commission. "When there is a lack of fairness, he fights against it," says Ken Nahigian, a former top McCain aide on the Senate Commerce Committee who coordinated McCain's boxing policy fights. "The boxing bill was sort of a microcosm of his philosophy." Indeed, McCain is often stirred by evidence of unfair play in sports—railing against steroid abuse in baseball and seeking to ban Internet gambling on the grounds that players have no way of knowing whether the games are rigged.

As is his knack, McCain has made some colorful enemies in his crusade to make boxing "a truly honest and legitimate sport." Most notable is the infamous giant-haired promoter Don King. When McCain said at one 1998 hearing that "[c]ertain promoters have become quite skilled in duping boxers into signing long-term contracts that represent nothing more than a sophisticated version of indentured servitude," it was clear that King was among his targets. (A King associate later groused that one McCain reform bill, the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act, "should have just [been] named … the Don King Reform Act.") In 2004, King delivered a bizarre high-profile endorsement of George W. Bush: "I'm sure that Mr. King, who's well-known for his philanthropy, has only engaged in the political process for altruistic reasons," McCain cracked to The New Republic's Jason Zengerle at the time. Now that McCain is the GOP nominee, King, who couldn't be reached for comment, has evidently seen the Democratic light and donated the legal maximum to Barack Obama.

In 1997, when a crazed Mike Tyson bit off part of Evander Holyfield's ear during a Las Vegas heavyweight boxing match, McCain went ballistic. "I, along with the 1.6 million Americans who watched the fight, was appalled by what took place last weekend," read a press release issued by his office. McCain subsequently opposed Tyson's efforts to regain his boxing license. But his disgust with Tyson's rule-breaking, ear-gnawing fisticuffs was nothing compared to his reaction to ultimate fighting. In 1995, McCain saw his first ultimate fighting video. As he explained to CNN's Larry King: "[S]ome of it is so brutal that it nauseates people; even hardened individuals are repelled by this." McCain quoted with revulsion an ultimate fighter who boasted about pounding an opponent's brain stem and digging at his eye sockets.



Not long after, McCain sent letters to all 50 governors railing against the "brutal and repugnant blood sport … that should not be allowed to take place anywhere in the U.S." More potently, in early 1997, he became chairman of the powerful Senate Commerce Committee, which oversees the cable industry. A few months later, the president of the National Cable Television Association warned that ultimate fighting broadcasts could damage the cable industry's standing in Washington, and several major cable operators stopped airing the sport. (In recent years, McCain has quieted his objections, citing self-regulation that has cleaned up ultimate fighting.) Goldman offers a vague and sinister conspiracy theory which holds that McCain carried water for Anheuser-Busch, a major boxing sponsor he says felt threatened by the new sport; McCain's wife, Cindy, chairs one of the country's biggest Anheuser-Busch distributors.

Far more likely, ultimate fighting offended McCain's core sensibility: that there is such a thing as a good fight—one that is both clean and fair. Ultimate fighting had blown up the traditional rules and etiquette of boxing. It appeared to McCain lawless and wild and utterly without the supposedly dignified "honor" of an old-school heavyweight fight.

Boxing, in other words, represents McCain's belief in the honorable war, one in which both sides follow a mutually agreed-upon code of organized violence. George Will has even suggested that McCain, as a former POW and torture victim, believed ultimate fighting violated the boundaries of "appropriate manliness." Or, as Goldman puts it, "From just an ideological standpoint, [boxing] is the pure, noble, manly art of fighting. And anything else—fighting on the ground, kicking—you just don't do!"

This also happens to be a nice summary of McCain's attitude toward campaign politics—his stated attitude, anyway. Now, with Barack Obama outmatching him as a presidential candidate, however, McCain's credo will be put to the test: Can he adhere to the ethos of honor and fair play that he so fanatically defends? Or will he succumb to temptation and strike at Obama's political brain stem and eye sockets? Goldman doesn't expect much from his old nemesis: "To me, I think most politicians are hypocritical from start to finish." Whether McCain campaigns more like a boxer, or more like an ultimate fighter, will help determine the truth of that statement.

Michael Crowley

End of the Affair

Barack Obama and the press break up.

Around midnight on July 16, *New York Times* chief political correspondent Adam Nagourney received a terse e-mail from Barack Obama's press office. The campaign was irked by the *Times*' latest poll and Nagourney and Megan Thee's accompanying front-page piece titled "Poll Finds Obama Isn't Closing Divide on Race," which was running in the morning's paper. Nagourney answered the query, the substance of which he says was minor, and went to bed, thinking the matter resolved.

But, the next morning, Nagourney awoke to an e-mail from *Talking Points Memo* writer Greg Sargent asking him

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to comment on an eight-point rebuttal trashing his piece that the Obama campaign had released to reporters and bloggers like *The Atlantic*'s Marc Ambinder and *Politico*'s Ben Smith. Nagourney had not heard the complaints from the Obama camp and had no idea they were so steamed. "I'm looking at this thing, and I'm like, 'What the hell is this?'" Nagourney recently recalled. "I really flipped out."

Later that afternoon, Nagourney got permission from *Times* editors to e-mail Sargent a response to the Obama memo. But the episode still grates. "I've never had an experience like this, with this campaign or others," Nagourney tells me. "I thought they crossed the line. If you have a problem with a story I write, call me first. I'm a big boy. I can handle it. But they never called. They attacked me like I'm a political opponent."

So much for "Obama Love." That's the title of John McCain's new web ad, which strings together clips of cable news pundits gushing over Obama like besotted teens. This romance has been a prominent story line of Obama's entire campaign, and clearly elements of it are true: "I felt this thrill going up my leg," Chris Matthews crows in one clip flagged in the ad. But scratch the surface, and you'll find a lot of mixed feelings behind the Obama "love." Reporters are grumbling more and more that the campaign is acting like the Prom Queen. They gripe that it is "arrogant" and "control[ling]," and the campaign's own belief that Obama is poised to make history isn't endearing, either. The press certainly helped Obama get so far so fast; the question is, how far can he get if his campaign alienates them?

Last year, when Hillary Clinton campaigned as a front-runner, Obama provided access to the press corps and won over the media. One night, during a campaign stop in Iowa, he met reporters for off-the-record drinks. He cooperated for magazine profiles and appeared on the cover of *GQ*. And Clinton's relationship with the press wasn't half as easy. "The difference is the Clinton people were hostile for no reason," a reporter who has covered both Democrats tells me.

But, as Obama ascended from underdog to front-runner to presumptive nominee, the flame seems to have dwindled. Reporters who cover Obama these days grouse that Obama's flacks shroud the campaign in secrecy and provide little to no access. "They're more disciplined than the Bush people," a reporter on the Obama trail gripes. "There was this idea of being transparent, but they're not. They're total tightwads with information."

In June, there was something of a revolt after Obama ditched the press corps on his campaign plane for a secret meeting with Clinton at Senator Dianne Feinstein's house in Washington, leaving the reporters trapped on the flight to Chicago. The D.C. bureau chiefs of half a dozen news organizations, including the late Tim Russert, sent an angry letter to Obama aides Robert Gibbs and David Plouffe and threatened not to reimburse the campaign for the cost of the flight. "The decision to mislead reporters is a troubling one," they wrote. "We hope this does not presage a relationship with the Obama campaign that is not based on a mutual respect for the truth." After the incident, the press corps decided that one pool reporter would keep Obama in sight at all times. "It's a body watch," one reporter jokes.

Meanwhile, there have been widespread complaints over the shortage of spots to accompany Obama on his tour of the Middle East and Europe. A few days before the tour departed, *Time* magazine was told it couldn't send a photographer along, and, on July 22, NBC foreign affairs correspondent Andrea Mitchell complained on-air that the only images the press had received of Obama meeting with the troops were released by the U.S. military. (To be fair, congressional delegations to Iraq are kept secret for security purposes.) And there's been widespread grumbling that the campaign revoked *New Yorker* writer Ryan Lizza's spot on the trip as retribution for the magazine's recent satirical cover. These may or may not be legitimate complaints—the evidence is mixed—but the press is hardly inclined to give the campaign the benefit of the doubt.

Obama's press liaison, Robert Gibbs, has built a particularly large reservoir of ill will. David Mendell, who covered Obama's Senate campaign for the *Chicago Tribune* and authored the 2007 Obama book *From Promise to Power*, wrote about Gibbs as "the anti-Obama" and described him as "Obama's hired gun, skillfully trained to shoot at reporters whose coverage was deemed unfair." Mendell tells me, "if [Gibbs] feels you're necessary to achieve a campaign goal, he will give you access and allow you in. But, if he feels you're not going to be of help, he can just ignore you." Mendell has his own specific gripe: Apparently, the Obama team was less than pleased with his biography, on which they cooperated, and Gibbs has since refused to help with the second edition.

One reporter sniffs that Gibbs, a native Alabaman and veteran of John Kerry's 2004 campaign, is the "communications director who doesn't communicate." "If you're getting an interview, and they say ten minutes, it's ten minutes," adds *Time*'s Karen Tumulty, who scored an interview with Obama in June. "Robert Gibbs will cut it off."

Much of this is certainly the run-of-the-mill complaining of campaign reporters who can't get enough access. Still, the campaign hasn't helped itself, approaching reporters with a sense of entitlement. "They're an arrogant operation. Young and arrogant," one reporter covering the campaign says. "They don't believe in transparency with their own campaign," another says.

Reporters who have covered Obama's biography or his problems with certain voter blocs have been challenged the most aggressively. "They're terrified of people poking around Obama's life," one reporter says. "The whole Obama narrative is built around this narrative that Obama and David Axelrod built, and, like all stories, it's not entirely true. So they have to be protective of the crown jewels." Another reporter notes that, during the last year, Obama's old friends and Harvard classmates were requested not to talk to the press without permission.

As tensions escalate, the risk to Obama, of course, is that reporters will be emboldened to challenge his campaign ever more aggressively. At the same time, McCain has demonstrated a longstanding ability to deftly manage the press. After all, it wasn't long ago that McCain, short on cash and trailing in the Republican primaries, re-launched his campaign in New Hampshire by courting the press, "my base," as he once proudly put it. In June, the McCain camp unveiled its redesigned campaign plane, a Boeing 737 that recreates the Straight Talk Express bus, so reporters can assemble with McCain and shoot the breeze.

Now Obama may be handing McCain a shot at winning back his "base." Of course, making ads that paint the media as Obama's stooges may not be the best way to accomplish that. But the press wants to put its love somewhere, and, right now, that love is up for grabs.

Gabriel Sherman

ANTHONY RUSSO

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Recruiting Scandal

The House GOP's desperate choice for desperate times.

Coconut Creek, Florida

Most political junkies never get the chance to protect the candidates they admire from rapacious Muslim terrorists with a yen for televised beheadings. But, just last week, Yomin Postelnik—a Pompano Beach, Florida, GOP activist—answered his own personal three a.m. call when, he wrote, a "low-level operative" with a Middle Eastern group attempted to ferry the Republican nominee for Congress in Florida's 22nd district, Allen West, to "an undisclosed location" and "pull off what most certainly seems to be a heinous stunt." Outraged, Postelnik posted a promise of retaliation against "the fiends" who targeted West at the news site *CanadaFreePress.com*, where he is a columnist. "I'd caution you against so much as threatening this man again, as the result would be a torrent of articles and books highlighting his exemplary nature and service," he wrote. "More writers than you care to know of have made this pact out of admiration for Allen and for what he stands for[.]"

Fortunately, Allen West managed to save himself. To be fair, it wasn't that hard. The fiendish Middle Eastern group was Al Jazeera, the intended "stunt" was an interview for a segment on black Republicans, and West just politely declined. The next day, when he regaled a group (including Postelnik) at a Coconut Creek retirement community with the tale of Al Jazeera's interview request, he meant the "undisclosed location" part to be a joke. "I doubt anyone was thinking about kidnapping me," he admitted later.

You can see why people might have missed the humor. The most famous thing about West—a former high-ranking African American Army officer—is that he was accused by the military in 2003 of abusing an Iraqi detainee. The fact that he is now the Republican nominee for Congress in an ostensibly competitive district speaks volumes about the current state of the GOP. "This is not the year in which an intelligent Republican would want to run against an incumbent," says GOP strategist Whit Ayres glumly. Recruitment troubles have plagued the party in what should be competitive districts from Arizona to Indiana to New York; in one blood-red district in North Carolina, the Republican choice, a right-winger named Carl Mumpower, recently shut down his own campaign to protest his party's lax stance on immigration.

The GOP's greatest embarrassment of all might seem to be Florida's 22nd, where the party that Iraq destroyed is running a candidate charged with violating the Uniform Code of Military Justice. And, yet, the South Florida GOP doesn't see it that way. This year's surprise in Palm Beach County is that local Republican officials, some of whom are also presiding over more competitive races, believe their candidate is not a laughingstock but *the* marquee Republican of the year—that he is not a symptom of what ails the national GOP but a possible cure.

Palm Beach County Republican Chairman Sid Dinerstein, a gregarious operative whose official bio recounts his receipt of Lefferts Junior High School's "Most Popular Boy" award, insists that as voters learn more about West's "Taji incident"—as West's spokesman delicately calls it—they'll begin to see it not as an echo of Abu Ghraib but as a neat parable about the dangers of creeping liberalism. An egghead who reads medieval Muslim history and the anti-socialist French thinker Frédéric Bastiat in his spare time, West was on track for a generalship when his unit was assigned in August 2003 to interrogate an Iraqi policeman who had supposedly turned Benedict Arnold. The policeman refused to cooperate, so West dragged him outside, pushed his head into the sand, and fired a gun next to his face to get him to sing. "I'd do it again if I had to," West tells me over tea and a doughnut in Plantation, Florida. "It wasn't torture. Seeing Rosie O'Donnell naked would be torture."

But that summer was an uneasy political moment—Joe Wilson had just published his yellowcake op-ed—and the Army, as West tells it, fell victim to political-correctness jitters, dragging him before an Article 32 hearing. When the legal and media circus was over, though, West found that he had gained conservative street cred. *National Review* championed him and the right-wing *FrontPage Magazine* named him 2004's "Man of the Year," declaring that he "earned the disdain of leftist intellectuals … for protecting the lives of his troops." Retiring from the army soon after, West began to float the idea of running for Congress.

Sadly for West, though, while conservative activists heralded him as an action hero, the national party showed little interest in rallying behind someone so controversial. Looking at the giant ziggurats of cash the Democrats were building to protect their newly won seats, the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) frantically searched for candidates who were safe and, most crucially, had access to a lot of money. In the 22nd—a district the Democrats took in 2006 but which still boasts more registered Republicans than Democrats—a scion of a famous Florida political family, a well-connected state representative, and the popular mayor of cash-soaked Boca Raton were all begged to run. All declined.

Disheartened, national Republicans stopped touting the race and adopted a "the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away" fatalism. "It's a miracle [former Republican representative Clay Shaw] held the seat as long as he did, but God stopped working the miracle," sighs a GOP strategist.

Indeed, there was barely even time to worry about Florida's 22nd as other recruitment problems popped up all over the country. In eastern Arizona, Republicans had to settle for their tenth choice; in Staten Island, the GOP's bottom-tier selection garnered an electoral challenge from his own disgruntled son—and then died. In Indiana's competitive 2nd district, the under-funded Republican challenger frittered away his precious money flying to Alaska to film pro-ANWR-drilling YouTube videos, one

David Cowles

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of which had to be aborted because he was overwhelmed by swarms of mosquitoes. In North Carolina's Bush-loving 11th, which failed Redskins quarterback Heath Shuler claimed for the Democrats with a 2006 upset win, the party finally settled on Asheville councilman Carl Mumpower—but, almost immediately after being nominated, Mumpower, like an immune defender cell gone wrong, began attacking the host body, calling for President Bush's impeachment and then, last week, briefly refusing to do any more campaigning. It turns out this is what you get for nominating a lawmaker who was, up to that point, primarily known for conducting his own extra-judicial crack busts.

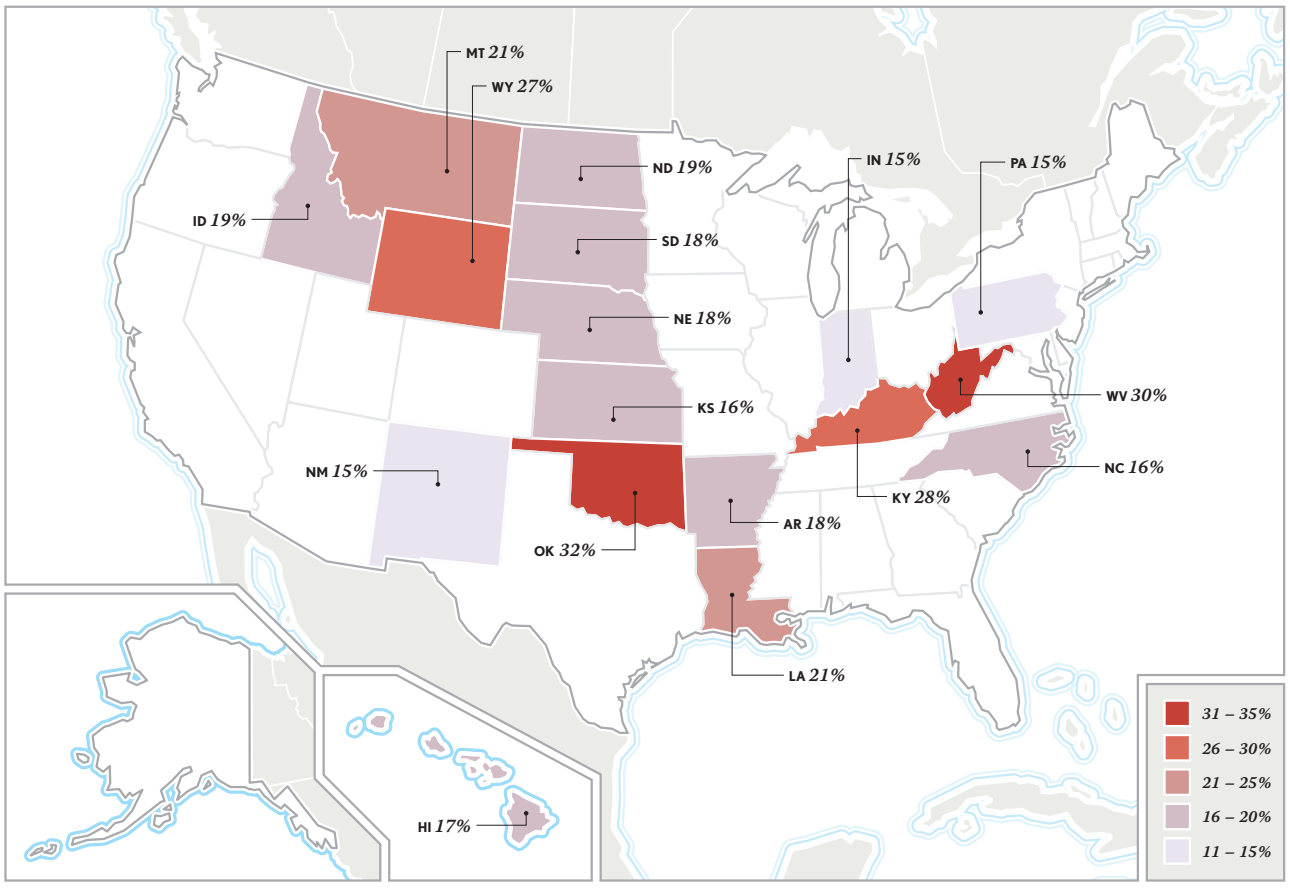
As the NRCC abandons seat after seat that it lost in 2006, there's neither money nor love to spare for somebody like Allen West. "I'm still waiting for J.C. Watts to call," West told me.

The national party's disinterest is vexing for the South Florida Republican leaders supporting West. They see him not as a lost cause, but as the national party's Hail Mary pass. He's a prototype of conservative manliness *and* an obvious alternative to Barack Obama. An eloquent speaker, he gets standing ovations wherever he goes. "You would think in the culture we're in now, the national party would stand up and take notice," complains Broward County GOP chair Chip LaMarca. "Heck, he's probably the most qualified message-deliverer we have—and he's black!" Indeed, as a black man who eschews African American culture in favor of self-consciously race-blind interests (he admires Confederate generals like Stonewall Jackson), West seems perfectly suited to soothe a certain type of older voter who intellectually dislikes racism but also fears the black-church-attending Obama. "I never grew an Afro," he tells a cluster of fans at the Coconut Creek retirement village. "I always had a nice little crew cut."

Most appealing of all, though, is the symbolism of his detainee scandal itself, and his unwillingness to repent for it. Dinerstein, the Palm Beach Republican chair, explains: "There's always been

THE BUSH DEMOCRATS

Campaigns talk all the time about "persuadable voters," and few voters are more persuadable than a voter from your own party with a history of splitting the ticket. According to exit polls, 11 percent of Democrats voted for George W. Bush over John Kerry in 2004. Those voters were concentrated in two discrete regions: the highlands of Appalachia and the Ozarks, where defection rates reached as high as 30 percent; and the Plains states and Mountain West. Barack Obama hasn't shown much success with those Democrats in Appalachia, where polling shows him trailing John McCain by about the same margins by which Kerry was defeated. But the West is another story: Obama has polled evenly with McCain in states like Montana and North Dakota. The truth is, those states have never been as conservative as their presidential numbers would indicate—but they are selective about just which Democrats they'll support. *Nate Silver*



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a belief by those of us on our side that the rules of engagement were inhibiting our military . . . I mean, the whole Abu Ghraib thing is quite extraordinary—not one person even got tortured! One of my sound-bites is that more people died in Teddy Kennedy's car." For humiliated Republicans constantly hearing that voters want "change"—in other words, anything but their shameful selves—West is a relief, a walking argument that they have been right all along. The desire among grassroots Republicans to resist adaptation and retrench behind the very traits that have caused them to come under fire helps explain some of the stranger nominees in other districts, too. I was amazed to find that a number of Republican politicians in North Carolina actually *like* Carl Mumpower.

Back in Coconut Creek, Pete DiRosa, the burly president of the retirement community's Italian-American Club, hops to his feet and, riled up by West, launches into a *Braveheart*-style oration: "We've gotten so complacent with the miracles we've got every day! This is the greatest country in the world! We're getting so soft!" Shhh, don't tell Al Jazeera.

Eve Fairbanks

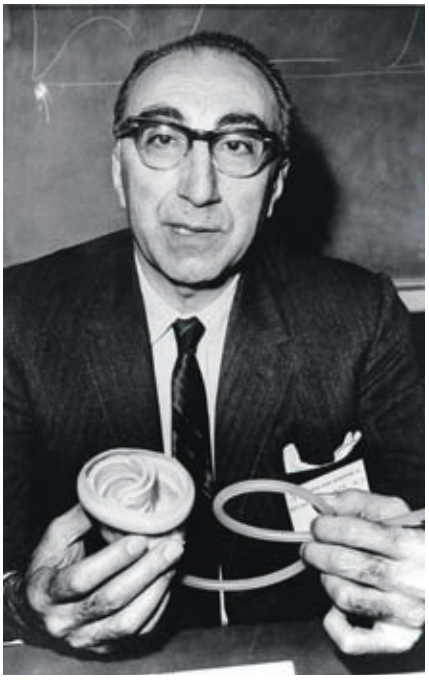
The Art of Incision

In praise of the greatest surgeon ever.

Among Dr. Michael DeBakey's approximately 30 visits to various parts of the former Soviet Union, there seems little doubt that one in November 1996 had the greatest potential for influencing the course of world history. The Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, was in dire need of a coronary artery bypass graft, and DeBakey was chosen by Yeltsin's physicians to judge whether to operate on their high-risk patient. "I took one hard look at him and saw that he had hyperthyroid heart disease, which they'd apparently missed, in addition to his coronary occlusive process," DeBakey told me one evening ten years later, while we were having dinner together in Houston. "He needed to have his thyroid function brought under control before it was safe to operate—or even administer an anesthetic." Following pharmacologic treatment of the overactive gland, the operation was accomplished without complication, and Yeltsin once again took his larger-than-life place on the world stage.

In choosing DeBakey to be their consultant, the Russian physicians were turning to the man who had performed the first successful such operation, in 1964, and even—while still a medical student—invented the roller pump used in the heart-lung bypass portion of the procedure. But he had done far more than that: I claim for him that he was the greatest surgeon of all time. And by this I include the humanism and artistry that are of necessity at the core of the complete surgeon's work.

Michael DeBakey, who died in Houston on July 11 at the age of 99, performed some 60,000 operations on the heart and major arteries during his career and had a hand in the introduction of virtually every significant cardiac procedure now being done, as documented in his approximately 1,600 publications in the medical literature. Among the DeBakey firsts was the replacement of sick or damaged arteries with Dacron grafts, the prototype for which he sewed himself from material he bought in a department store. Nor were his contributions solely in the field of technical surgery. It was a paper by him and Dr. Alton Ochsner in 1939 that was among the first to point out the connection between cigarette smoking and lung cancer. He was also instrumental in organizing the structure that evolved into the Veterans Administration hospital system.



Dr. Michael DeBakey demonstrating a model of a plastic heart (left) and with his most famous patient, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, in 1996 (below).

AP

I first met him in 1998, when we spent a morning together in New York in connection with the release of a book with which we were both involved. We kept in touch over the years, and I traveled to Houston in 2005 to spend a few days with him. On that trip, and over the course of several conversations in both cities during the intervening years, he revealed the spectrum of his knowledge in various areas.

DeBakey had a knack for one-on-one talk and spoke with the authority of a man who is accustomed to being listened to. But he was a good listener as well—at least to people who had something significant to say. He was of average height, five-foot-ten by his own account, but the cowboy boots he usually wore, as well as that air of authority, made him seem taller than he was. Adding to that impression was his long, narrow head, which, augmented by a high widow's peak of thin black hair, was almost bladelike in its configuration.

Our conversations encompassed topics as varied as the history of science, the Industrial Revolution, the origins and theology of Islam and Christianity, the Reformation, the Renaissance, the eighteenth-century background to American democracy, literature, poetry, and a seeming score of other subjects. Nor was there a superficial quality to his knowledge. In each area, he proved himself to have mastered large amounts of information and to be very articulate in expounding on them.

But none of this broad-ranging description catches the essence of the man, or the driving force that propelled him into so many areas with so much effectiveness. During one interview, I asked him about such things. His answer was deceptive in its seeming simplicity:

> Curiosity and the seeking of knowledge is a transcendent life force—almost, you might say, spiritual. It has a driven character to it. It drives you intellectually and, to an extent, physiologically. The brain influences the body in ways we don't know about.

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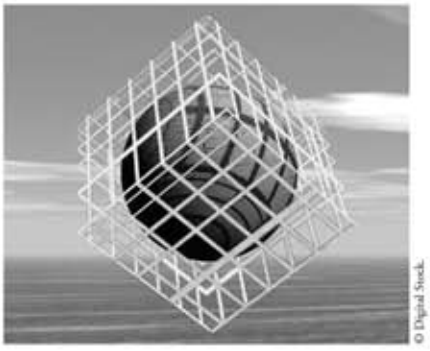

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a Distinguished Teaching Professor at The University of Texas at Austin. Professor Starbird has won several teaching awards, most recently the 2007 Mathematical Association of America Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo National Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics, which is limited to three recipients annually from the 27,000 members of the MAA.

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Ambition is not enough and even talent alone cannot explain why some men or women make great strides in their fields of endeavor and others come up short. When curiosity is combined in one person with the energy that DeBakey applied to his every exploration of the body's workings, an irresistible momentum is created, in the face of which one problem after another is solved.

DeBakey's eminence may be said to have begun during World War II, when he was director of the Surgical Consultant Division of the Office of the Surgeon General. In this capacity, he played a crucial role in the founding of the National Library of Medicine and the mobile surgical hospitals called MASH units.

In 1948, DeBakey arrived to be chairman of surgery at Baylor, which, at the time, had a struggling medical school with neither an affiliated hospital nor a residency training program. Today, it is one of the leading medical centers of the world, largely because he guided it along the path to that eminence, in the process raising vast amounts of money (and contributing hundreds of millions of his own dollars, made from heart, vascular, and other operations) and attracting an all-star faculty. He served as president from 1969 to 1979 and chancellor from 1979 to 1996, all the time pursuing what amounted to a full surgical schedule.

When I asked DeBakey why he finally stopped operating at the age of 90, his reply was, "Because there were so many other things that needed to be done." Those "other things" included laboratory research developing a cardiac assist device and his never-ending travels as a consultant to so many organizations and governments. In addition, he has maintained long-term follow-up studies on 95 percent of his operated patients, an archive of immense value.

Despite all of his efforts to bring surgery closer to science, in the long run DeBakey, like all surgeons, recognized that it is ultimately an art form. For there is indeed an aesthetic to surgery, and an observer is aware of it within minutes of stepping into an operating room. I doubt that it is possible to do a completely satisfactory job of the various techniques that make up an operation without being acutely conscious that one is involved in an art.

The first major operation I saw looked like a ballet of fingers to me, and I have never lost the sense when I am operating that my fingers are engaged in a kind of complicated and tightly coordinated dance with those of my colleagues during those precious moments. The gentle touch is crucial. Sensitive tissues do not respond well when handled roughly, and may not heal. Living biological structures tolerate very little abuse, and are quick to express their displeasure when treated with less than the consideration that Mother Nature has made them accustomed to. The man or woman who cannot be an artist will never be more than a pedestrian surgeon.

That notion was epitomized in the work of DeBakey, not only in the technical sense but in the intellectual as well. He had what I can only call a graceful mind, to match the grace and precision of his surgery. In fact, it was that graceful mind that made me want to see more of him after that first day in New York. Like all the best surgeons, DeBakey had a panoramic eye that swept all manner of detail into its field of vision. When that very first sweeping, get-acquainted look (which physicians call "inspection") was completed, he already had important information at his fingertips that he used in forming his all-encompassing impression of the disease process and how best to approach it.

It was always said of DeBakey that he was a hard taskmaster, anything but easy on his trainees. He applied to them the same standards he applied to himself, and he could be harsh when they were not fulfilled. The performance of a ballet leaves no room for error, especially when a life is involved. In surgery, to be an aesthete is merely to fulfill the expectations one has of oneself. Mike DeBakey's expectations—of himself and others—were always the highest.

Sherwin B. Nuland

Sherwin B. Nuland is clinical professor of surgery at Yale, where he is also a research affiliate in the Department of the History of Science and Medicine and the Institution for Social and Policy Studies.

AP

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They Refused to Go...

To Hitler's Olympics

By Rafael Medoff & Sal Amendola

THE 1936 SUMMER AND WINTER OLYMPICS WERE SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN NAZI GERMANY, AND AMERICANS WERE DIVIDED OVER WHETHER THE UNITED STATES SHOULD TAKE PART. THE NAACP, THE CATHOLIC WAR VETERANS, AND A NUMBER OF JEWISH GROUPS CALLED FOR A BOYCOTT. THEY WARNED THAT HITLER WOULD EXPLOIT THE GAMES TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM GERMANY'S HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. FOR ITS PART, THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION OPPOSED A BOYCOTT. THE AMERICAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE ULTIMATELY VOTED TO PARTICIPATE.

A HANDFUL OF COURAGEOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES—CHRISTIANS AND JEWS ALIKE—REFUSED TO GO. THEY TOOK A STAND AGAINST THE NAZIS, EVEN THOUGH IT MEANT GIVING UP THE CHANCE TO COMPETE IN THE WORLD'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS COMPETITION.

JACK SHEA, A NORTH AMERICAN SPEED-SKATING CHAMPION WHO HAD WON TWO GOLD MEDALS AT THE 1932 OLYMPICS IN LAKE PLACID, NEW YORK, ANNOUNCED HE WOULD NOT TRY OUT FOR THE 1936 OLYMPICS IN GERMANY AS A PROTEST AGAINST "NAZI BARBARISM."

HERMAN NEUGASS OF TULANE UNIVERSITY WAS ONE OF AMERICA'S FASTEST SPRINTERS. DESPITE A PERSONAL APPEAL BY OLYMPIC TRACK-AND-FIELD COACH LAWSON ROBERTSON, NEUGASS DECLARED THAT HE WOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THE 1936 GAMES "BECAUSE OF THE WAY THE JEWS ARE TREATED."

THE LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY BLACKBIRDS:

BEN KRAMER, MARIUS RUSSO, JULES BENDER, KEN NORTON, LEO MERSON, BILL SCHWARTZ, ARTHUR HILLHOUSE, HARRY GRANT, AND COACH CLAIR BEE.

THESE YOUNG MEN, WHO CAME FROM A VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS, WERE WIDELY REGARDED AS THE BEST BASKETBALL TEAM IN THE NATION, HAVING WON 33 STRAIGHT GAMES IN 1935-1936. BUT LIU PRESIDENT TRISTRAM METCALFE ANNOUNCED THAT, BECAUSE OF GERMANY'S ANTI-JEWISH ACTIONS, THE TEAM HAD DECIDED TO BOYCOTT THE GAMES.

NORMAN CAHNERS AND MILTON GREEN, ROOMMATES AND TRACK-AND-FIELD STARS AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY, BOTH QUALIFIED FOR THE FINAL PRE-OLYMPICS TRIALS. BUT, GREEN EXPLAINED, THEY WERE "HORRIFIED AT THE TERRIBLE THINGS THAT WERE GOING ON IN GERMANY," AND THEREFORE DECIDED TO WITHDRAW.

LILLIAN COPELAND HAD WON NINE U.S. AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIPS IN TRACK-AND-FIELD EVENTS, SET A WORLD RECORD IN DISCUS-THROWING AT THE 1928 OLYMPIC TRIALS, AND CAPTURED A GOLD MEDAL IN THE 1932 OLYMPICS. BUT, TO PROTEST NAZI OUTRAGES AGAINST THE JEWS, SHE REFUSED TO TRY OUT FOR THE 1936 GAMES.

SYD KOFF, A TRACK-AND-FIELD STAR, WON FOUR GOLD MEDALS AT THE 1932 MACCABIAH GAMES, AN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION IN TEL AVIV. HER VICTORIES INSPIRED LOCAL TEENAGE GIRLS TO MIMIC HER TRADEMARK BERET. AFTER QUALIFYING FOR THE 1936 OLYMPIC TEAM, KOFF ANNOUNCED SHE WOULD BOYCOTT THE GAMES TO PROTEST PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS.

AS THE WORLD PREPARES FOR CHINA TO HOST THE OLYMPIC GAMES, WE REMEMBER THE UNSUNG HEROES OF 1936, WHO STOOD UP FOR THEIR PRINCIPLES AT A TIME WHEN TOO MANY PEOPLE PREFERRED TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY.

Rafael Medoff is director of the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies. Sal Amendola is an illustrator, writer, and editor of comic books, as well as a School of Visual Arts faculty member.

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Trading Places

The demographic inversion of the American city.

ALAN EHRENHALT

THIRTY YEARS AGO, the mayor of Chicago was unseated by a snowstorm. A blizzard in January of 1979 dumped some 20 inches on the ground, causing, among other problems, a curtailment of transit service. The few available trains coming downtown from the northwest side filled up with middle-class white riders near the far end of the line, leaving no room for poorer people trying to board on inner-city platforms. African Americans and Hispanics blamed this on Mayor Michael Bilandic, and he lost the Democratic primary to Jane Byrne a few weeks later.

Today, this could never happen. Not because of climate change, or because the Chicago Transit Authority now runs flawlessly. It couldn't happen because the trains would fill up with minorities and immigrants on the outskirts of the city, and the passengers left stranded at the inner-city stations would be members of the affluent professional class.

In the past three decades, Chicago has undergone changes that are routinely described as gentrification, but are in fact more complicated and more profound than the process that term suggests. A better description would be "demographic inversion." Chicago is gradually coming to resemble a traditional European city—Vienna or Paris in the nineteenth century, or, for that matter, Paris today. The poor and the newcomers are living on the outskirts. The people who live near the center—some of them black or Hispanic but most of them white—are those who can afford to do so.

Developments like this rarely occur in one city at a time, and indeed demographic inversion is taking place, albeit more slowly than in Chicago, in metropolitan areas throughout the country. The national press has paid very little attention to it. While we have been focusing on Baghdad and Kabul, our own cities have been changing right in front of us.

Atlanta, for example, is shifting from an overwhelmingly black to what is likely to soon be a minority-black city. This is happening in part because the white middle class is moving inside the city borders, but more so because blacks are moving out. Between 1990 and 2006, according to research by William Frey of the Brookings Institution, the white population of Atlanta has increased from roughly 30 percent to 35 percent while the black population has declined from 67 percent to 55 percent. In this decade alone, two of Atlanta's huge suburban counties, Clayton and DeKalb, have acquired substantial black majorities, and immigrants arriving from foreign countries are settling primarily there or in similar outlying areas, not within the city itself. The numbers for Washington, D.C. are similar.

Race is not always the critical issue, or even especially relevant, in this demographic shift. Before September 11, 2001, the number of people living in Manhattan south of the World Trade Center was estimated at about 25,000. Today, it is approaching 50,000. Close to one-quarter of these people are couples (nearly always wealthy couples) with children. The average household size is actually larger in lower Manhattan than in the city as a whole. It is not mere fantasy to imagine that in, say, 2020, the southern tip of Manhattan will be a residential neighborhood with a modest residual presence of financial corporations and financial services jobs. What's happening in Lower Manhattan isn't exactly an inversion in the Chicago sense: Expensive condos are replacing offices, not poor people. But it is dramatic demographic change nevertheless.

If you want to see this sort of thing writ large, you can venture just across the Canadian border to Vancouver, a city roughly the size of Washington, D.C. What makes it unusual—indeed, at this point unique in all of North America—is that roughly 20 percent of its residents live within a couple of square miles of each other in the city's center. Downtown Vancouver is a forest of slender, green, condo skyscrapers, many of them with three-story townhouse units forming a kind of podium at the base. Each morning, there are nearly as many people commuting out of the center to jobs in the suburbs as there are commuting in. Two public elementary schools have opened in downtown Vancouver in the past few years. A large proportion of the city's 600,000 residents, especially those with money, want to live downtown.

No American city looks like Vancouver at the moment. But quite a few are moving in this direction. Demographic inversions of one sort or another are occurring in urban pockets scattered all across America, many of them in seemingly unlikely places. Charlotte, North Carolina, is in the midst of a downtown building boom dominated by new mixed-use high-rise buildings, with office space on the bottom and condos or rental units above. Even at a moment of economic weakness, the condos are still selling briskly.

We are not witnessing the abandonment of the suburbs or a movement of millions of people back to the city all at once. But we are living at a moment in which the massive outward migration of the affluent that characterized the second half of the twentieth century is coming to an end. For several decades now, cities in the United States have wished for a "24/7" downtown, a place where people live as well as work, and keep the streets busy, interesting, and safe at all times of day. This is what urbanist Jane Jacobs preached in the 1960s, and it has long since become the accepted goal of urban planners. Only when significant numbers of people lived downtown, planners believed, could central cities regain their historic role as magnets for culture and as a source of identity and pride for the metropolitan areas they served. Now that's starting to happen, fueled by the changing mores of the young and by gasoline prices fast approaching $5-per-gallon. In many of its urbanized regions, an America that seemed destined for ever-increasing individualization and sprawl is experimenting with new versions of community and sociability.

WHY HAS DEMOGRAPHIC INVERSION begun? For one thing, the deindustrialization of the central city, for all the tragic human dislocations it caused, has eliminated many of the things that made affluent people want to move away from it. Nothing much is manufactured downtown anymore (or anywhere near it), and that means that the noise

TOP: BENJAMIN RONDEL/CORBIS; BOTTOM: JOSE FUSTE RAGA/CORBIS

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and grime that prevailed for most of the twentieth century have gone away. Manhattan may seem like a loud and gritty place now, but it is nothing like the city of tenement manufacturing, rumbling elevated trains, and horses and coal dust in the streets that confronted inhabitants in the early 1900s. Third-floor factory lofts, whether in Soho or in St. Louis, can be marketed as attractive and stylish places to live. The urban historian Robert Bruegmann goes so far as to claim that deindustrialization has, on the whole, been good for downtowns because it has permitted so many opportunities for creative reuse of the buildings. I wouldn't go quite that far, and, given the massive job losses of recent years, I doubt most of the residents of Detroit would, either. But it is true that the environmental factors that made middle-class people leave the central city for streetcar suburbs in the 1900s and for station-wagon suburbs in the 1950s do not apply any more.

Nor, in general, does the scourge of urban life in the 1970s and '80s: random street violence. True, the murder rates in cities like Chicago, Philadelphia, and Cleveland have climbed in the last few years, but this increase has been propelled in large part by gang- and drug-related violence. For the most part, middle-class people of all colors began to feel safe on the streets of urban America in the 1990s, and they still feel that way. The paralyzing fear that anyone of middle age can still recall vividly from the 1970s—that the shadowy figure passing by on a dark city street at night stands a good chance of being a mugger—is rare these days, and almost nonexistent among young people. Walk around the neighborhood of 14th and U streets in Washington, D.C. on a Saturday night, and you will find it perhaps the liveliest part of the city, at least for those under 25. This is a neighborhood where the riots of 1968 left physical scars that still have not disappeared, and where outsiders were afraid to venture for more than 30 years.

The young newcomers who have rejuvenated 14th and U believe that this recovering slum is the sort of place where they want to spend time and, increasingly, where they want to live. This is the generation that grew up watching "Seinfeld," "Friends," and "Sex and the City," mostly from the comfort of suburban sofas. We have gone from a sitcom world defined by "Leave It to Beaver" and "Father Knows Best" to one that offers a whole range of urban experiences and enticements. I do not claim that a handful of TV shows has somehow produced a new urbanist generation, but it is striking how pervasive the pro-city sensibility is within this generation, particularly among its elite. In recent years, teaching undergraduates at the University of Richmond, the majority of them from affluent suburban backgrounds, I made a point of asking where they would prefer to live in 15 years—in a suburb or in a neighborhood close to the center of the city. Few ever voted for suburban life.

I can't say that they had necessarily devoted a great deal of thought to the question: When I asked them whether they would want to live in an urban neighborhood without a car, many seemed puzzled and said no. Clearly, we are a long way from producing a generation for whom urban life and automobile ownership are mutually exclusive. In downtown Charlotte, a luxury condominium is scheduled for construction this year that will allow residents to drive their cars into a garage elevator, ride up to the floor they live on, and park right next to their front door. I have a hard time figuring out whether that is a triumph for urbanism or a defeat. But my guess is that, except in Manhattan, the carless life has yet to achieve any significant traction in the affluent new enclaves of urban America.

Not that cars and the demographic inversion aren't closely related; they are. In Atlanta, where the middle-class return to the city is occurring with more suddenness than perhaps anywhere in the United States, the most frequently cited reason is traffic. People who did not object to a 20-mile commute from the suburbs a decade ago are objecting to it now in part because the same commute takes quite a bit longer. To this, we can add the prospect of $5-per-gallon gasoline. It's impossible at this point to say with any certainty just what energy costs will do to American living patterns over the next decade. Urbanists predicted a return to the city during previous spikes in the cost of gasoline, notably during shortages in the 1970s. They were wrong. Gas prices came down, and the suburbs expanded dramatically. But today's prices at the pump are not the result of political pressures by angry sheiks in the Persian Gulf. They are the result of increased worldwide demand that is only going to continue to increase. Some suburbanites will simply stay where they are and accept the cost. But many will decide to stop paying $100 every few days for a tank of gasoline that will allow them to commute 40 or 50 miles a day, round-trip.

Ultimately, though, the current inversion is less the result of middle-aged people changing their minds than of young adults expressing different values, habits, and living preferences than their parents. The demographic changes that have taken place in America over the past generation—the increased propensity to remain single, the rise of cohabitation, the much later age at first marriage for those who do marry, the smaller size of families for those who have children, and, at the other end, the rapidly growing number of healthy and active adults in their sixties, seventies, and eighties—have combined virtually all of the significant elements that make a demographic inversion not only possible but likely. We are moving toward a society in which millions of people with substantial earning power or ample savings can live wherever they want, and many will choose central cities over distant suburbs. As they do this, others will find themselves forced to live in less desirable places—now defined as those further from the center of the metropolis. And, as this happens, suburbs that never dreamed of being entry points for immigrants will have to cope with new realities. It should come as no surprise that the most intense arguments about hiring and educating the undocumented have occurred in the relatively distant reaches of American suburbia, such as Prince William County, Virginia.

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The reality of demographic inversion strikes me every time I return to Chicago, the city in which I was born and grew up. My grandfather arrived there in 1889, found his way to the Near West Side, and opened a tailor shop that remained in business for 50 years. During that time, the neighborhood was a compact and somewhat culturally isolated enclave of Jewish and Italian families. (It was also the location of Hull House and the original home of the Chicago Cubs.) The building that housed my grandfather's store was torn down in the 1960s when the University of Illinois built its Chicago campus in the neighborhood. The street corner where the store stood now houses part of the university science complex.

The UIC campus is, to my eyes, one of the ugliest in America. But I have made my peace with that. What interests me is what is going on all around that neighborhood, now called University Village. For a while after the school was built, its environs were a sort of residential no-man's-land, dangerous at night and unattractive to the young academics who taught there. Today, assistant professors at UIC generally don't live there either, but for a different reason: They can't afford it. Demand for the townhouses and condominiums on the Near West Side has priced junior faculty out of the market. One can walk a couple of blocks down the street from where my grandfather's shop once stood and order a steak for $24.

You might respond that there is nothing especially noteworthy in this. A college setting, liberal academics, houses close to the city's cultural attractions: That's garden-variety gentrification. What else would you expect?

If you feel that way, you might want to ride an elevated train going northwest, to the lesser-known Logan Square, a few miles beyond the Loop. Whatever Logan Square might be, it is not downtown chic. It is a moderately close-in nineteenth-century neighborhood with a history fairly typical for a city that A.J. Liebling once called "an endless succession of factory-town main streets." Logan Square was developed primarily by Scandinavian manufacturers, who lived on the tree-lined boulevards while their workers, many of them Polish, rented the cottages on the side streets. By the 1970s, nearly all the Poles had decamped for suburbia, and they were replaced by an influx of Puerto Ricans. The area became a haven for gangs and gang violence, and most of the retail shopping that held the community together disappeared.

Logan Square is still not the safest neighborhood in Chicago. There are armed robberies and some killings on its western fringe, and, even on the quiet residential streets, mothers tell their children to be home before dark. But that hasn't prevented Logan Square from changing dramatically again—not over the past generation, or the past decade, but in the past five years. The big stone houses built by the factory owners on Logan Boulevard are selling for nearly $1 million, despite the housing recession. The restaurant that sits on the square itself sells goat cheese quesadillas and fettuccine with octopus, and attracts long lines of customers who drive in from the suburbs on weekend evenings. To describe what has happened virtually overnight in Logan Square as gentrification is to miss the point. Chicago, like much of America, is rearranging itself, and the result is an entire metropolitan area that looks considerably different from what it looked like when this decade started.

Will Chicago, the city of slaughterhouses and skyscrapers, soon look like haute bourgeois nineteenth-century Vienna?

Of course, demographic inversion cannot be a one-way street. If some people are coming inside, some people have to be going out. And so they are—in Chicago as in much of the rest of the country. During the past ten years, with relatively little fanfare and surprisingly little press attention, the great high-rise public housing projects that defined squalor in urban America for half a century have essentially disappeared. In Chicago, the infamous Robert Taylor Homes are gone, and the equally infamous Cabrini-Green is all but gone. This has meant the removal of tens of thousands of people, who have taken their Section 8 federal housing subsidies and moved to struggling African American neighborhoods elsewhere in the city. Some have moved to the city's southern suburbs—small suburbs such as Dixmoor, Robbins, and Harvey, which have been among the poorest communities in metropolitan Chicago. At the same time, tens of thousands of immigrants are coming to Chicago every year, mostly from various parts of Latin America. Where are they settling? Not in University Village. Some in Logan Square, but fewer every year. They are living in suburban or exurban territory that, until a decade ago, was almost exclusively English-speaking, middle-class, and white.

There are responsible critics who look at all this and see a lot being made out of very little. They argue that, in absolute numbers, the return to the urban center remains a minor demographic event. They have a point. In most metropolitan areas, in the first few years of the twenty-first century, many more people have moved to the suburbs than have moved downtown. A city of half a million that can report a downtown residential population of 25,000—5 percent of the total—can claim that it is doing relatively well. Charlotte, for all the local excitement it has generated about upscale in-town living, still has no more than about 12,000 residents downtown. Moreover, these 12,000 are not representative of the area's populace; there are few families with school-age children. Downtown Charlotte is mostly attracting the familiar gentrification cohort: singles, couples, older people whose children have left home. The bulk of the married-with-children middle-class has not only been living in the suburbs, it has been moving to the suburbs. Joel Kotkin, perhaps the most prominent of the downtown

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debunkers, declares flatly that, until families begin turning up in significant numbers on downtown streets, we are talking about a blip rather than a major cultural phenomenon.

But it's not just a blip. The evidence from most American cities—carefully presented by Christopher Leinberger, the real estate developer and University of Michigan urban planning professor, in his recent book, *The Option of Urbanism*—suggests that the number of downtown residents these days depends more on supply than demand. Few in Charlotte dispute that, if there were 30,000 upscale residential units in the center of that city, there would be 30,000 people living in them before long. The residential population of lower Manhattan has not just increased substantially since 2001; it has all but exploded in the last 18 months. And the strollers have reached Wall Street. Take a walk down there some Saturday morning, and you will see for yourself.

But, even if the critics are mostly right—even if the vast majority of cities never see a downtown residential boom of massive proportions—there is no doubt that a demographic inversion, in which the rich are moving inside and the poor are moving outside, is taking place. The crucial issue is not the number of people living downtown, although that matters. The crucial issue is who they are, and the ways in which urban life is changing as a result.

What would a post-inversion American city look like? In the most extreme scenario, it would look like many of the European capitals of the 1890s. Take Vienna, for example. In the mid-nineteenth century, the medieval wall that had surrounded the city's central core for hundreds of years was torn down. In its place there appeared the Ringstrasse, the circle of fashionable boulevards where opera was sung and plays performed, where rich merchants and minor noblemen lived in spacious apartments, where gentlemen and ladies promenaded in the evening under the gaslights, where Freud, Mahler, and their friends held long conversations about death over coffee and pastry in sidewalk cafés. By contrast, if you were part of the servant class, odds were you lived far beyond the center, in a neighborhood called Ottakring, a concentration of more than 30,000 cramped one- and two-bedroom apartments, whose residents—largely immigrant Czechs, Slovaks, and Slovenes—endured a long horse-car ride to get to work in the heart of the city.

Paris was a different story. It had always had a substantial inner-city working class, the breeding ground for political unrest and violence over and over again in French history. But the narrow streets that housed the Parisian poor were largely obliterated in the urban redesign dictated by Baron Haussmann in the 1850s and '60s. The Paris that Haussmann created was the city of fashionable inner-ring boulevards that remains largely intact a century and a half later. The poor and the newly arrived were essentially banished to the suburbs—where they remain today, though they are now mostly Muslims from North Africa rather than peasants from the south of France.

Nobody in his right mind would hold up the present-day arrangement of metropolitan Paris, with its thousands of unemployed immigrants seething in shoddily built suburban high-rise housing projects, as a model for what twenty-first-century urbanism ought to look like. Indeed, in the worst case, demographic inversion would result in the poor living out of sight and largely forgotten in some new kind of high-rise projects beyond the city border, with the wealthy huddled in gated enclaves in the center. But I think this is an unlikely scenario. The people who are moving to the downtowns of American cities today are doing so in part to escape the real or virtual "gated-ness" of suburban life. The condos that house them in the coming years may feature elaborate security systems, but the inhabitants will not be walled off from the street. They want to be in contact with the street. Nor do we have to worry about the return of the idea of warehousing the poor in vertical Corbusian ghettoes. That is one beast we have managed to slay.

Less dystopian are the prophecies of Leinberger, who believes that a dramatic increase in middle-class central-city population will in fact take place, and that one consequence will be the deterioration of today's car-dependent, suburban tract homes into the slums of 2030. I don't think this will happen either, at least not in such extreme form. There simply are not enough lofts and townhouses to double or triple the number of people living in the center of a mid-sized American city. As the central-city population continues to grow, so will the demand for skyscrapers—something cities are sure initially to resist. Nor does it seem likely that exurbia will turn into a wasteland. The price of the houses will go down and render them more attractive for newcomers trying to rise in the U.S. economy and society. Urbanists have complained for years that immigrants and poor people in the inner city have a hard time commuting to the service jobs that are available to them in the suburbs. If they live in the suburbs, they will be closer to the jobs. Transportation will remain a problem, but not one that can't be solved.

Somewhere in between, there lies the vision of Jane Jacobs, who idealized the Greenwich Village of the 1950s and the casual everyday relationships that made living there comfortable, stimulating, and safe. Much of what Jacobs loved and wrote about will not reappear: The era of the mom-and-pop grocer, the shoemaker, and the candy store has ended for good. We live in a big-box, big-chain century. But I think the youthful urban elites of the twenty-first-century are looking in some sense for the things Jacobs valued, whether they have heard of her or not. They are drawn to the densely packed urban life that they saw on television and found vastly more interesting than the cul-de-sac world they grew up in. And, by and large, I believe central cities will give it to them. Not only that, but much of suburbia, in an effort to stay afloat, will seek to urbanize itself to some extent. That reinvention is already taking place: Look at all the car-created suburbs built in the 1970s and '80s that have created "town centers" in the past five years, with sidewalks and as much of a street grid as they can manage to impose on a faded strip-mall landscape. None of these retrofit efforts look much like a real city. But they are a clue to the direction in which we are heading.

In the 1990s, a flurry of academics and journalists (me among them) wrote books lamenting the decline of community and predicting that it would reappear in some fashion in the new century. I think that is beginning to happen now in the downtowns of America, and I believe, for all its imperfections and inequalities, that the demographic inversion ultimately will do more good than harm. We will never return—nor would most of us want to return—to the close-knit but frequently constricting form of community life that prevailed 50 years ago. But, as we rearrange ourselves in and around many of our big cities, we are groping toward the new communities of the twenty-first century. ◆

Alan Ehrenhalt is executive editor of Governing Magazine and author of The United States of Ambition and The Lost City.

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Devils' Advocates

Despots and the lobbyists who love them.

JAMES KIRCHICK

Joe Szlavik remembers the moment when he began to suspect that his work on behalf of the Kingdom of Swaziland was an enormous waste of time. It was 2006, and Szlavik—a lobbyist who had represented foreign governments ranging from Burundi to Gabon to Uganda, as well as the late Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan—was helping Swaziland, a tiny, landlocked monarchy sandwiched between South Africa and Mozambique, navigate the tricky waters of Washington politics. Swaziland's King Mswati III ("a great guy, one-on-one," says Szlavik, but "real green behind the ears") and his foreign minister ("crusty, old guard, and incompetent") were in town, and the lobbyist met them at the stately Willard InterContinental Hotel. Szlavik, whose firm was pulling in $20,000 per month from its Swaziland account, had some difficult news to deliver about a certain Swazi custom. "You have this reed dance, with these virgins," he explained to me recently. Szlavik's message to his client was simple. "Listen to me," he implored the king. "You got to stop this."

The reed dance, or "umhlanga" in the Swati language, is probably Swaziland's best-known tradition. Every August or September, thousands of girls congregate at Ludzidzini, the King's royal residence, for an eight-day festival of music, dancing, and singing, officially in honor of the king's mother. On the seventh day, the young women—all topless—don skirts made of freshly cut reeds and perform personally for the king, who may decide to choose one of them as a bride. The reed dance had recently been a source of domestic political embarrassment for Mswati. In 2001, troubled by his country's high HIV rate (at least one-third of the population is believed to be infected), Mswati had issued a decree that no girl below the age of 18 would be allowed to have sex for five years. Then, in 2004, at the annual reed dance, Mswati chose a twelfth wife.

David Cowles

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The problem: She was 16 (and a former Miss Teen Swaziland finalist to boot), meaning that the king was now technically in violation of his own law.

Soon enough, the sex ban was lifted. The reed dance, however, continued—and, back in Washington, it was causing Szlavik no end of problems. Earlier, he had brought the king and Swazi ambassador to meet with Chris Smith, a socially conservative Republican representative from New Jersey and then chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa. Smith "understood there was a traditional part to the dance but in light of the gravity of the HIV situation [thought] maybe they could put tradition aside," Szlavik recalls.

Such arguments were lost on King Mswati. "Look Joe, I understand the whole thing with the West, but we look at breasts like you look at feet," the monarch told him. It wasn't an unreasonable point. In some rural African cultures, women refraining from wearing tops is about as common as U.S. postal workers wearing shorts in the summer. But try explaining that to a conservative Republican congressman.

"I like breasts personally," Szlavik, a fast-talking cheerful man of about 40, told the king. "But, you know, there's a sexual undertone to it clearly."

In fact, Szlavik had good reason to think the Swazis might take his advice on reforming the reed dance. Since he began working for the Swazi government the year before, he had helped convince them to sign Article 98 of the Rome Statute—a clause that ensures legal immunity for U.S. government officials (including soldiers) serving abroad—and persuaded the king, Africa's last absolute monarch, to suspend a 1973 decree issued by his father banning political parties. Reforming the reed dance, however, was a step too far.

It's easy to dismiss someone like Szlavik as a comic figure. After all, lobbying for the King of Swaziland doesn't sound like the weightiest job in Washington. But, comic or not, lobbying for dictatorships actually has a long history—and, apparently, a thriving present as well. That, at least, is the conclusion you'd have to reach from surveying the members of the McCain campaign, which, in recent months, has seemed to be saturated with men giving advice to dubious foreign leaders. In May, Doug Goodyear quit his position as Republican National Convention chair after *Newsweek* revealed that his DCI Group had lobbied on behalf of the Burmese military junta for $348,000 in 2002. That same month, Thomas Loeffler, a national co-chairman of the McCain campaign, resigned after *The New York Sun* reported that he was a registered lobbyist for Saudi Arabia. McCain's original choice for the convention job, Paul Manafort, also got his hands dirty working for brutal foreign clients, particularly the Philippines' Ferdinand Marcos and Vladimir Putin ally Viktor Yanukovich of Ukraine. His firm, Davis Manafort, which he co-directed with McCain campaign manager Rick Davis, had, at various times, represented Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi, two men infamous for their sadism.

Under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) of 1938, anyone who "acts at the order, request, or under the direction or control of a foreign principal" must register with the Justice Department. Congress passed FARA in response to Nazi Germany's attempts, through hired hands, to propagandize in the United States. If shilling for odious foreign governments shouldn't be illegal, lawmakers figured, it could at least be a matter of public record. In addition to those flacking for foreign governments, individuals representing foreign political parties, leaders, and state-owned entities (like tourism boards or nationalized industries) must also register.

Some of the countries that manage to find representation in Washington make Swaziland look like a liberal paradise. Mississippi governor Haley Barbour's old lobbying firm, Barbour Griffith & Rogers, has represented Equatorial Guinea, a totalitarian state in West Africa. Former Congressional Black Caucus chairman Mervyn Dymally briefly represented Mauritania, a country where slavery is still practiced. And topping them all for sheer gall was William Keyes, a former Reagan White House staffer, who lobbied for apartheid South Africa in the 1980s. Keyes, no relation to Alan, is black.

What could possibly drive lobbyists to represent such awful governments? The obvious answer is that the money is sometimes quite good. In March, for instance, ex–Louisiana Republican Representative Bob Livingston's firm signed a contract with Muammar Qaddafi's Libya worth $2.4 million. But that can't be the only explanation, as tin-pot dictatorships are notoriously fickle when it comes to paying up. "They're very unreliable clients," says George Denison, a former Ford administration staffer who has lobbied for various foreign governments, some of them pretty low on Freedom House's annual ranking of worldwide liberty. "Frequently, they pay you once, and that's the last time." In Szlavik's case, the reed dance may have been a huge headache, but so was the country's delinquency in payment. "They were late; they didn't pay their bills on time," he complains.

So, if it isn't money that motivates these lobbyists, what is it? True, lobbying for dictators sounds like a caricature of the lobbying profession as a whole—people with no morals shilling for the world's least savory people. But it isn't that simple. In fact, there may be a darker psychological explanation for why Americans would lobby for such awful governments.

Consider the most infamous of Washington's dictator lobbyists, the late Edward von Kloberg III. A character out of a Washington novel, the flamboyantly gay Kloberg represented men too despicable for most of the big-time lobbying firms—Saddam Hussein and Nicolae Ceauşescu, among others. Kloberg threw lavish parties, wore a black opera cape, and ferried himself around Washington in a limousine. In 1992, *Spy* magazine launched a sting operation in which a writer disguised as a neo-Nazi leader of a group advocating the German annexation of Poland asked Kloberg to represent him for $1 million. Kloberg accepted. "Shame is for sissies," he would often say.

Kloberg was certainly well compensated for his efforts—$10,000 per month from the Burmese, $15,000 per month from Gambia, and so on—and he needed the money to sustain his outrageous style of living. (Even with his substantial income, "I heard Kloberg was always going bankrupt," says Denison.) Yet he was clearly driven by something more than money. Partly, it was an appetite for drama—of which Third World politics contains no shortage, and of which Kloberg could not get enough, even in death. "I am going to drink a pint of brandy tonight and go to the twelfth floor of my building and jump to my death," he told a friend in early 2005. On May 1 of that year, he more or less delivered on his promise—committing suicide by jumping off the top of the same castle in Rome from

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which Tosca, the namesake of a Puccini opera, had leapt to her demise.

But Kloberg's love of theatrics was only part of the story. He seems to have been living out a fantasy that Westerners have indulged since colonial times: the possibility that, in a faraway land, a man who is a mere commoner in the West might get to play at being royalty—at exercising a level of power and influence he would never even get close to at home. Perhaps that is why Kloberg, like many of the dictators he represented, adorned himself in phony medals. Or why he added "von" to his last name, at the suggestion of former *Washington Times* editor Arnaud de Borchgrave, and printed up business cards with the title "Baron." Or why he boasted of the influence he exercised over the regimes he advised: He liked to note that he convinced a Saddam Hussein–era Iraqi ambassador to the United States to meet with Jews for the first time in his life and that he attached a condition to a trade deal he won for Ceaușescu stipulating that the Romanian leader permit the printing of Bibles. "We attempt to balance and even change the situation," he said, "by offering realistic advice to our clients and facts that are often ignored by the press." In other words, Kloberg wasn't always doing the bidding of dictators; sometimes, they did his.

You can see similar instincts at work in far more staid individuals. Take Hank Cohen, assistant secretary of state for African affairs in the first Bush administration, who, for two years beginning in September 2000, represented Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe as a lobbyist. Cohen's relationship with Mugabe stretched back to January 1991, when, on the eve of the first Gulf war, Secretary of State James Baker dispatched him to Harare to convince the Zimbabwean government to back a Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force. (At the time, Zimbabwe held one of Africa's three rotating seats on the Council.) Cohen was apprehensive about his assignment, given that Mugabe was deeply suspicious of the West. Going into his face-to-face meeting with Mugabe, Cohen recalls, "I was expecting a tirade." Instead, the Zimbabwean dictator said, "Tell Secretary Baker that I'm with you 100 percent. We don't want big countries swallowing up small countries."

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And that wasn't the only act of cooperation that endeared Mugabe to Cohen. In retaliation for the Gulf war, the Iraqi government planned a series of terrorist attacks against U.S. targets around the world. Not long after Cohen secured Zimbabwe's vote on the Security Council, Iraqi agents traveled to Harare with high-powered artillery and booked a room in the Sheraton Hotel overlooking the U.S. Embassy. Zimbabwean intelligence officials, however, got a tip about the suspicious Middle Eastern visitors and apprehended them. The State Department requested that Zimbabwe turn the men over to the CIA, which promptly flew them to a base in Cyprus for interrogation. "After a guy does something like that," Cohen told me, "how can you be angry at them?"

No wonder Cohen was convinced that Mugabe could be controlled. When he took the account in 2000, Cohen, who frequently works with Denison on lobbying projects (including the ill-fated Zimbabwe account), hoped to convince the Zimbabwean government to see the error of its ways, he tells me. "Our theory on that was to try to get them to do the right thing," Denison recalls. Within two years, however, the pair had given up. Mugabe was bent on confiscating farms owned by whites, and no one was going to convince him he was wrong. "It quickly became clear that his intentions were not honorable," Cohen says.

Mugabe isn't the only shady character Cohen has represented in Washington. In April 1999, his firm filed to represent Charles Taylor of Liberia, who now sits before an International Criminal Court tribunal on war crimes charges regarding his involvement in the Sierra Leone civil war, a conflict infamous for the thousands of people whose limbs were amputated on Taylor's orders. "Do this, do that, clean up your act"—that is how Denison describes his and Cohen's relationship with Taylor. "We tried to convince him not to fool around with the rebellion in Sierra Leone," Denison says, adding, "But he's just a big liar."

Cohen and Denison, it seems, believed they had more power over their clients than they actually did. "At the end of the day, the client does what the client wants to do," one lobbyist told me. "They don't pay us to take our advice. They pay us to listen to it." But the prospect of influence, even if it is only imagined, is undeniably part of the allure of lobbying for small-time despots. Washington lobbyists love to think of themselves as power brokers. And what better fulfills the fantasy of power than telling rulers with absolute power how to run their country? Call it colonialism via K Street.

There is a handful of dictatorships that nobody represents. Since Kloberg's arrangement with the government of Hafez Assad ended in 1994, no one has represented Syria. And no one has ever registered to represent North Korea (though this isn't for lack of trying; according to his *New York Times* obituary, Kloberg courted Kim Jong Il, but to no avail).

As tempting as it may be to work on behalf of dictatorships, some Washington lobbyists can't stomach the moral dilemma. One former White House staffer, now working as a freelance consultant, told me that he was recently asked through an intermediary if he would advise the government of Yemen. He had one question: "Where are they cooperating on the war on terror?" He asked a former colleague in the Bush administration who "was less than confident that the Yemenites were completely good actors," which led him to reject the offer. The lobbyist who complained that dictators never listen says that it isn't always lofty moral concerns that prevent his peers from representing dictatorships, but the inherently futile nature of the task. "I can't represent these people because they're so bad that going out there and putting lipstick on a pig isn't going to work," he says.

And as for those who do give it a try? More often than not, they seem to end up disappointed. That's what happened to Szlavik. Having failed to negotiate reforms to the reed dance, he nevertheless soldiered on with the Swaziland account. In late 2007, he secured the (literally) royal treatment for King Mswati and his entourage at a Kennedy Center performance by Roberta Flack. The center provided the trustees box and arranged an introduction from its executive director, all for the king's pleasure. The U.S. government provided Secret Service protection. On the evening of the performance, however, the king was a no-show. "The foreign minister sabotaged it. . . . I'm not the brightest bulb on the block, but I'm not going to sit around doing this shit anymore," Szlavik remembers thinking. Rick Sincere, Szlavik's partner, says that "what finally caused us to break the relationship [with the Swazis] was that they weren't paying attention to what we were doing for them. We were giving them advice and they wouldn't follow it. They pay us for our expertise and then they ignore it." As Roberta Flack might put it, where is the love? ◆

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Insiders

The reinvention of Obama's geek squad.

JONATHAN COHN

EARLIER THIS SUMMER, when the Obama campaign announced that Jason Furman was joining its staff as director of economic policy, the storyline seemed to write itself: Centrist adviser will pull Obama to the right. Furman had first made a name for himself as a wonky twentysomething wunderkind in the later years of the Clinton administration—a period when, to the consternation of many liberals, Clinton emphasized balanced budgets, free trade, and welfare reform. One of Furman's best-known champions is the senior Clinton adviser most closely identified with that period: investment banker and former Treasury secretary Robert Rubin. And, if there is one research paper for which Furman, who has a Ph.D. from Harvard, is best known, it's probably the paper he wrote a few years ago suggesting that Wal-Mart—a bête noire of liberals—might actually be good for working people. "We are very much taken aback that Furman has been put at the head of this team," one national labor leader groused to the *Los Angeles Times*.

But other elements of Furman's record belied such fears. He's spent the last few years focusing heavily on health care reform, an issue generally of greater concern to the left, going so far as to develop his own innovative proposal to give everybody insurance while scaling out-of-pocket expenses to income—an idea that's arguably more progressive than many mainstream proposals. Even before then, Furman had developed a reputation as an honest broker—somebody held in high regard by economists across the Democratic Party's ideological spectrum. "My own views, such as they are, are irrelevant," Furman said to *The New York Times* when joining the campaign. While that may have overstated things a bit, Obama's aides made a similar vow: Furman was there to advance the candidate's vision, they insisted, not his own.

And that's how things seem to be working out. One of Furman's first tasks was to turn ad hoc phone calls among outside economic advisers into a regular, weekly ritual. Those calls sometimes include two of Rubin's longtime allies from the Clinton administration, policy maven Gene Sperling and Berkeley economist Laura Tyson. But they also include Robert Reich, Clinton's former Labor secretary, who was Rubin's chief sparring partner within the administration; and Jared Bernstein of the Economic Policy Institute, a think tank known for attacking centrist economic orthodoxy from the left. The influence these advisers have over actual policy decisions is limited: Although they debate issues among themselves and send ideas up the chain of command, their primary job is to take the campaign's message to the public as surrogates. But it's still a more institutionalized role than populists like Bernstein and Reich have had in recent campaigns: "I think it's fair to say this candidate and this policy process is more inclusive," Reich told me. "There's a systematic outreach to a variety of perspectives."

But, if Furman's arrival in Obamaland wasn't a harbinger of ideological change, it may have signaled another shift that's been underway ever since the primaries ended. At every level, from the candidate himself down through his field-level organizers, the hallmark of the Obama campaign has been the prominent role for people who, at least in the cloistered world of Democratic presidential campaigns, count as "outsiders." And this quality has, in most respects, been a source of strength. But it's also exposed some weaknesses: among them, an occasional failure to find the magical sweet spot where good politics meets good policy. Locating that sweet spot is considered Furman's expertise; it's a talent he's honed working for the last two Democratic presidential nominees. It also makes Furman emblematic of a whole new wave of Obama staff recruits, many of whom boast similar resumés heavy in wonkery and time logged with past presidential campaigns—not least among them, the campaign of Obama's recently vanquished rival, Hillary Clinton.

THE OFFICIAL EXPLANATION for hiring Furman and the others is that the campaign is simply bulking up on staff to deal with the increased intensity of the general election, something all campaigns do at this stage. And that's almost surely correct. But there is little doubt that the addition of people like former Clinton policy director Neera Tanden, who now works alongside Furman and handles non-economic domestic policy, or veteran opposition researcher Dan Carroll, who has joined the communications staff, is changing the Obama campaign's DNA.

Two years ago, once Obama decided to run for president, finding an experienced staff to run his campaign wasn't so easy.

DAVID COWLES

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Clinton had locked up the most seasoned operatives, leaving her rivals to rely on their own, smaller networks. John Edwards, for example, recruited heavily from his 2004 campaign staff. But Obama had no comparable circle of policy advisers on which to draw. During his brief Senate career, he'd leaned on Karen Kornbluh, an accomplished writer on social welfare issues, to develop his policy ideas. She ran what amounted to an ongoing intellectual salon out of his Senate office, an effort that produced a series of major speeches and, eventually, the core ideas in Obama's *The Audacity of Hope*, which outlined his policy agenda in embryonic form. But it was one thing to preach about these ideas as an extremely junior senator in the minority party; it was quite another to flesh them out and defend them as a presidential candidate with a real shot at the White House. And Kornbluh, citing the strain a presidential campaign puts on one's family, did not follow Obama to Chicago.

Instead, Obama ended up turning to Austan Goolsbee and Heather Higginbottom. Goolsbee is a center-left University of Chicago economist with a contrarian mentality known, among other things, for his innovative use of data. While he had done the policy work for Obama's Senate run in 2004, the two didn't have the decades-long relationship that, say, Bob Reich had had with Bill Clinton. Higginbottom was a more conventional choice for adviser; she'd worked in the policy shop of John Kerry's 2004 campaign, where her combination of smarts and political instincts made her a highly valued, if unheralded, adviser. But she was even more of a stranger to Obama—available for hire, in part, because she'd been waiting to see if Kerry would run again.

Higginbottom would take the policy department's helm, reporting directly to chief strategist David Axelrod. Goolsbee, who kept his faculty position at the University of Chicago, would become the campaign's most influential economics adviser. Around them, the campaign assembled a supporting cast of others from beyond the Clintons' primary orbit. Among them were two highly regarded, left-of-center Harvard economists known for pushing the boundaries of debate: David Cutler, whose recent research has suggested that expensive medical technologies yield more benefits than some critics acknowledge, and Jeff Liebman, a tax policy and inequality expert who once made a cautious and nuanced case for integrating private accounts into Social Security. Also unconventional was the choice of Jason Kamras to advise Obama on educational policy: His expertise came not from government but from the classroom; in 2005, he'd been named national teacher of the year.

Necessity was not the only impetus for this eclectic staff: Higginbottom says she was carrying out a mandate from Obama himself to present him with intellectually diverse views. And that undoubtedly served the campaign well in many instances. "They made a few out-of-the-box decisions, like on [opposing Clinton's gas tax holiday], that worked very well for them," says one veteran operative with ties to the Obama campaign. "I wonder if they would have made some of those more interesting decisions if they had as many experts at mixing the policy and the politics." Another happy by-product of this process was the construction of a campaign relatively devoid of ego and turf-consciousness—which helps explain why, relative to the infamously fractious Gore and Kerry presidential campaigns, this one has been conspicuously bereft of infighting. Many insiders credit Higginbottom, who, despite her influence, keeps a low profile, with fostering this environment.

But, with a few exceptions like Higginbottom, it was still a policy staff relatively thin on actual campaign experience. And that showed in May 2007, when—in their first major policy presentation, just months after coming together as a team—they rolled out Obama's health care plan. With key decisions about the plan unresolved until the last minute, they had little time to adequately brief either reporters or surrogates; even days after the announcement, campaign spokesmen sent out confusing, sometimes conflicting, signals about what the plan actually said. This contrasted sharply with the seamlessly orchestrated unveilings that the Edwards campaign had conducted months before and that the Clinton campaign would conduct months later. Subsequent policy rollouts went more smoothly. But the policy team had another, far more visible goof when the press reported that Goolsbee had assured Canadian officials that Obama's rhetoric about redrawing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was just political posturing. Although Goolsbee says his words were misinterpreted, campaign officials acknowledged that it was the kind of situation a more seasoned operative would have avoided. Goolsbee, who'd become increasingly visible in the media, slipped from public view after that. (Furman is now the one who typically shows up on CNN, although Goolsbee remains a top adviser.)

Of course, Goolsbee's statement was almost certainly true: As Obama himself later suggested to *Fortune* magazine, his rhetoric on NAFTA had strayed from his policy sensibility, which was less overtly hostile to free trade. During the primaries, his union-friendly rhetoric on education also deviated from his original writings and speeches, which put more emphasis on teacher accountability. On other, more recent occasions, Obama has wandered right, over faith-based social services and the Iraq war. In none of those cases did Obama actually contradict himself; in each one, he was guilty, at most, of changing emphasis. (And, to be very clear about it, these episodes hardly compare to the wholesale flip-flops of the McCain campaign; see TRB, page 5 for more on this.) But emphasis is often the way campaigns send messages and frame political debates.

It's not clear exactly what role Obama's policy staff played in determining these moves. But, in a campaign where pure strategists like Axelrod are both closer to the candidate and greater in number, it's fair to wonder how hard policy specialists can push back to defend an issue position when it's become an electoral liability. And that's where somebody with Furman's portfolio might make a difference: by putting another strong voice for substance at the table and, when necessary, coming up with creative ways to square smart policy with unpalatable politics. In 2004, for example, it was Furman who played a key role in producing one of the few bright spots for Wesley Clark's doomed presidential bid: a tax-reform proposal that managed to promise Democratic voters a goody—lower taxes for everybody making less than $50,000—while simultaneously pursuing a goal cherished by most card-carrying economists, a simpler tax system. And, if the job at this late stage involves more policy promotion than policy formulation, that's also something where the new blood's influence is already showing. Typical was a recent Furman memo—they come to policy reporters almost every other day now—dissecting the McCain budget. It was crisply done, with an easy-to-grasp summary. But, with footnotes, an appendix, and eight pages of text, it was also devastatingly thorough.

The danger in this transformation, naturally, is that it goes too far—that, with the addition of so many veterans, the Obama campaign loses some of its characteristic brashness. But that seems like a second-order worry at this point, particularly since nobody within the campaign thinks of the staff changes as an overhaul. It was the outsiders like Higginbottom who got Obama this far, and it will be the outsiders who carry him to a victory, should he win. Picking up a few insiders like Furman just makes that outcome a little more likely. ◆

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

CRIME AND STYLE

THE BASE, THE VERY SOURCE, of many documentaries is not often acknowledged—the confidence that the people in the film have in the director. In *A Very British Gangster*, a criminal named Dominic Noonan, notorious in the extreme, talks on camera about his career with almost complete frankness. Murder he evades, though not the murders he has threatened. Everything else he talks about in a chatty way, as if he were discussing a conventional life. Noonan, thirty-nine at the time of filming and the head of a gang of about twenty youths and men in Manchester, converses in pubs and streets and homes with more than candor. Indeed, a lot of the time Noonan and company are bragging.

The director for whom they brag is Donal MacIntyre, an English television reporter, whose first film this is. (It was first shown on British television.) How he won their confidence we do not hear, but he certainly has it. Of course MacIntyre knew two things in advance. Noonan was famously infamous. This film is not an exposé: it's an extension, so MacIntyre was dealing with a sort of celebrity. And once he got their agreement, he surely knew, Noonan and pals would love doing the film. As often happens in documentaries, the subjects became camera-drunk: they apparently couldn't get enough of it. In one street scene Noonan chases some kids out of the way because they interfere with the "fucking filming."

Most of the youths and men in his gang, including his nephew and son, look typecast. Noonan himself is barrel-chested, large-domed with a shaved head, bespectacled, with a humorous ferocity. A sketch of his bio: he is connected with six gangland murders, has swiped $8 million in heists, has spent twenty-two of his thirty-nine years in prison, and has paid out a fortune in legal fees. During the course of the picture, he is tried three more times and acquitted three times. His nephew Sean, who has a pleasant singing voice, is asked where and when he sings. "At weddings and funerals and acquittals," he says. "Mostly acquittals."

A VERY BRITISH GANGSTER
Anywhere Road

BOY A
The Weinstein Company

Part of Noonan's relative insouciance about his prison years may be due to the fact that he is avowedly gay (despite having a son). More: he describes in detail, without a trace of rancor, his enforced sexual initiation in boarding school. Currently he sleeps with at least one member of his crew, who is proud of it. In any case the members of the Noonan gang like being in it: at one point he leads them in a jolly song while he whacks away on the drums.

The making of this picture must have gone on for some time. In one grim scene Noonan's brother boasts of not caring if he is killed; he is just going to keep on living as he does. Later—we don't know how much later—he is stabbed to death. A tremendous funeral is held, with lots of shops and offices closing out of respect. Not much of Dominic's mourning is shown, nor many details of his revenge. We do know, however, that earlier on, in *Godfather* style—he twinkles away as he tells us—he chopped off the head of a dog to persuade its owner of something.

The brother's funeral is Roman Catholic, and at one point later MacIntyre asks Noonan (they are in a church) how he reconciles his career with his religion. His reply probably won't surprise priests, though it can't gladden them. He says that after he does certain things, he goes to church for forgiveness, and after forgiveness he can carry on as before.

The setting of almost all we see is Manchester. The first shot is of Noonan standing before a vista of the city, saying, "Manchester is where I was born, where I live, and where I'll die." Most of the dialogue is in local dialect and thus incomprehensible. Sensibly, the film is equipped with subtitles. The effect is like watching a foreign film even though it is in English. It makes us feel, as well-subtitled foreign films do, admitted to privacies.

Cinematically this film is an oddity, not because it is shot in very good color but because MacIntyre uses many of the devices that we would expect only in fiction films—shots in the rearview mirrors of cars, extensive crane shots, and so forth. Further, some quite incidental shots may have been rehearsed. These effects don't hurt the picture's basic verity, but they do gift-wrap it a bit.

A Very British Gangster proves yet again that one great asset of film is vicarious participation in crime. Sex is OK, adventure and fantasy and even horror are OK, but crime lets us sneer at the laws we must live by, lets us relish evil and come out unscathed. Paradoxically, we feel as if we have stepped for a while into the real world underneath the laws and proprieties, a world that generously tolerates the conventions prettily laced above it. This is the crux of the matter—the schizoid world. I was once the foreman of the jury in a Mafia trial (not murder) and was convinced of this stratification. I was very glad of the

ANTHONY RUSSO

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surface texture, but I knew that the forces of law were well aware of the huge cosmos underneath—knew that, though this cosmos could be nagged from time to time, it was *there*.

As we are all aware from *The Godfather* and multiple other gangster films, and as MacIntyre's film warrants, honor among thieves is their ultimate power. They pay occasional dues to the law in prison terms and hangings, but they are unified, placed, reconciled to their risks by their fierce honesty to themselves. Anyway, Sean says that he sings a lot at acquittals.

Boy A is about a quite different sort of criminal, a victim of fate rather than a dynamo of ego and will. By coincidence this film, which is fictional, also takes place in Manchester. A twenty-four-year-old man, now called Jack Burridge, is trying to start his life again—really for the first time—after a fourteen-year prison term. Through much of the story we know he is an ex-con, and we are led to think that, as a boy, he stole cars and went for joyrides. Yet we eventually learn that when he was nine he was involved in a much more serious crime. When we see it, we shiver at how easily a child could slip into it. (Boy A is what he was called during the trial.)

Now Jack is out, with his new name in a new city, under the watch of a caseworker who really cares about him. A job is found for him at a warehouse, and he finds a girl. Yet as the film moves on, we feel less of a struggle than of the evolving of a fate. Everyone, including his boss and his girlfriend, knows that he was in jail, and all are being open-minded about it. He and the girl, affectingly drawn by Katie Lyons, are making their way to a lasting relationship. His boss even brags about the fact that he has given a fellow a second chance. Jack's mates at the job take him as a friend. But when they all find out, through newspaper snooping, what he really did, the weather changes.

The screenplay by Mark O'Rowe from a novel by Jonathan Trigell never minimizes the weight of Jack's juvenile act, yet it conveys that he is more a victim of boyish stupidity than a criminal. The director, John Crowley, matches this blend with two kinds of shots, conventional ones and spare astringent ones that suggest the secret Jack. Crowley gets a remarkable performance from Andrew Garfield: his Jack is a person who carries guilt with him even when he is trying to override it. Peter Mullan, who was a strong Jean in the Mike Figgis film of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, plays Jack's caseworker in a quietly stalwart key. Crowley rightly focuses a good deal on Mullan's wise and weathered face.

Any reader of *The New York Times* knows that in recent years the paper has been in the throes of rejuvenation, trying to shuck its "good gray" image, trying for up-to-the-minute verve. For this reader, the most extraordinary part of this change has been the effect of Manohla Dargis, one of the paper's chief film critics. She joined the *Times* in 2004 and quickly showed large knowledge of the field and basic seriousness. But what has especially marked her work from the start is her attractive style. Her opinions can leave me distanced, even aghast, but the writing in her reviews is always clever, pulsing, winningly intense. Her pieces seem less to have been poked out on a computer than uncorked from a constantly sparkling source.

What is even more remarkable is that she seems to have affected much of the *Times*—not everyone, by any means, but a substantial number of critics, columnists, feature writers, and headline writers for all except the grave stories. A few *Times* people were breezy before Dargis came (Maureen Dowd, for instance), but a lot of others seem to have become somewhat Dargisian. I doubt that the editors have enjoined the staff to take her as a model, but then they didn't need to. The staff is, of course, well aware that the paper wants to metamorphose and must see that Dargis is a prime exponent of the change.

The editors certainly knew her style beforehand, which must be one of the reasons they engaged her, but could they have known that, as it seems to one reader, a film critic would both certify and enhance so much of the paper's new spirit? ◆

David Hajdu on Music
BREAKOUT

The greatest heroes of all are the ones unsung. They can be no less than glorious because the realm of their glory is the admiring mind. Essentially unchallengeable, the unsung are unbeatable. They derive much (and sometimes all) of their status in the individual imagination from their lack of status in the public arena. They are heroes in part *because* they are unsung, and to sing of them is to enhance one's conception of oneself as a unique creature blessed with special knowledge and superior judgment.

ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO: REAL ANIMAL
Back Porch Records

We all have heroes we treasure for being unsung. Me, I have the late bebop guitarist Bill DeArango, the cabaret singer Barbara Lea, the theater composer Mickey Leonard, and the genre-bending Austin songwriter Alejandro Escovedo, among others. It is with a weird combination of boosterish joy, a vain sense of vindication, and twisted feelings of loss and relief that I have been watching Escovedo suddenly, at the age of fifty-seven, rise out of the ranks of the unsung. After more than thirty years of writing, singing, and playing the guitar, recording on his own and as a member of various bands of several kinds, gigging in clubs and filling the mid-day lineups in music festivals, Escovedo is now doing the things that breakout stars do. He has a heavily promoted new album on a major label—*Real Animal*, released by Back Porch Records, a division of EMI/Blue Note—produced by the rock veteran Tony Visconti (best known for his work in the 1970s with David Bowie and T. Rex); and to plug it Escovedo appeared in June on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* and *The Today Show*; and he has just finished a big-time arena tour as the opening act for Dave Matthews.

Last summer I saw Escovedo at the Newport Folk Festival, where he was accompanied by an arty quartet of two cellos, violin, and acoustic guitar (played by the wonderful David Pulkingham), with whom he had been performing, on and off, for several years. Escovedo and the group did a fine and varied set of tunes from his long career, including the lovely mariachi-ish ballad "Rosalie," which, as I recall a year later, Pulkingham and Escovedo did quietly, as a duet; and the hard-driving "Castanets," the closest thing to a hit that Escovedo has ever had. (Thanks to Mark McKinnon, who is George W. Bush's media strategist, the song showed up a few years ago on what the administration described as the president's iPod playlist; with its country-rock vibe and

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its chorus about having an appetite for rejection—"I like her better when she walks away"—the song seems like one Bush might actually enjoy.) The set was ambitious and spirited, but it was not especially well received. In the press tent the next day, trying to fill in my notes on the musicians, I asked a few people if they knew the names of the chamber players in Escovedo's group, and more than one person responded by asking me who Escovedo was.

A couple weeks before the release of *Real Animal*, I caught Escovedo opening for Matthews at the Toyota Pavilion in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Before Escovedo played, Matthews came onstage to introduce him. He said that "a friend of mine named Steve Earle" first told him about Escovedo, thereby anointing Escovedo with impeccable alt-country associative cool, and he asked the crowd to welcome the man "everybody's talking about." Escovedo, performing with an electrified reconfiguration of his usual band (bassist, drummer, one cellist, a violinist, and Pulkingham, now playing mainly electric guitar), did a tight, solid show dominated by songs from the new album, including as "Always a Friend," a poppish trifle that Escovedo had performed with Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band in Houston a couple of months earlier, and "Chelsea," an appropriately confused two-chord rant about Escovedo's youthful days in the Chelsea Hotel with Sid and Nancy. Although Daveheads are notoriously indifferent to everyone but Matthews, Escovedo got a huge ovation and did an encore of fifteen or twenty minutes. When Matthews came out for his own set, he said, "Now I know what Steve Earle was talking about," and even that secondhand reference to Escovedo got applause, though there is no knowing if it was for Escovedo, for Earle, or for Matthews's good fellowship.

With so much talking and singing about being friends, much of what has been going on with Escovedo lately feels like a rock-star version of Facebook. It has the same "if you like A, you'll like B" message as all those Web recommendation lists, which conflate the application of aesthetic judgment with the exercise of purchasing power, and which reduce the human response to art to an algorithmic function. That said, Escovedo is a musician who has earned the advocacy of his more famous and influential colleagues, however dubious their friendship may be.

There is a YouTube clip of Springsteen singing "Always a Friend" in concert with Escovedo, and it brings unnervingly to mind the video from 1985 of "You're a Friend of Mine," in which Springsteen's actual lifelong friend Clarence Clemons made like he was an old pal of Jackson Browne's. Clemons and Browne smiled and gazed into each other's eyes and sang nose to nose, while Browne's then-girlfriend Daryl Hannah lounged sultrily nearby, as if to douse any suggestion that the heretofore unknown friendship between Clemons and Browne was *that* special. Both videos of friendship around E Street have had overt strategies of marketing through association. In "You're a Friend of Mine," Clemons was trying to establish an identity apart from Springsteen without undermining his established appeal as a foil to a diminutive white man with a guitar; and Browne, a career wuss, wanted to be Springsteen. In the clip of "Always a Friend," Escovedo, a talented but idiosyncratic musician with a loyal but small following, found common musical ground with Springsteen in hopes of attracting some of Springsteen's gargantuan audience; and Springsteen seemed happy to endorse a real-life figure very much like the noble laborers and natives of the Tex-Mex borderlands whom he romanticizes in his songs.

Real Animal is the rarest sort of breakout album: a look backward at a lengthy career. It is not a compilation of old tracks, but a collection of new songs dealing musically and lyrically with Escovedo's earlier life and work. As he has made plain in interviews about the album, it is a rumination but not a valedictory. This is good to hear, because *Real Animal* is less than the strongest album in his catalog. Escovedo nearly died in 2003, and his health remains tenuous. A road dog who for decades made a living (or an approximation of one) in bars, Escovedo has worked and lived and drunk hard. One night before a performance in Tempe, Arizona, he began to vomit blood, but he went on and did the show. After the performance Escovedo collapsed, and he was hospitalized and diagnosed with advanced cirrhosis of the liver, as well as varices on his esophagus and abdominal tumors from untreated hepatitis C. For more than a year he was unable to play the guitar, and a regimen of interferon brought on premature aging and mental illness. Much improved now but not cured, Escovedo treats his condition with self-prescriptions of homeopathic remedies and work at his music.

I would hesitate to detail this medical history, for fear of subordinating the music to the narrative, were Escovedo's trauma not central to the work that he has made in recent years. Near the end of 2005, Escovedo recorded an album of songs dealing with mortality, fear, and his tools for survival, called *The Boxing Mirror*. "Have another drink on me," he sang in "Arizona," the potent lead track. "I've been empty since Arizona / I turned my back on me / And I faced the face of who I thought I was."

Produced by John Cale, one of Escovedo's youthful idols, the record brings to mind the noisy, endearingly affected prepunk glam rock of the early 1970s—the sound of the Velvet Underground, the New York Dolls, T. Rex, and Mott the Hoople. It is a style of music with enormous capacity for misuse, as Panic at the Disco and The Darkness have shown by appropriating glam for ironic effect. A style elementally ironic should not be adopted ironically; it needs to be employed with earnest conviction, as Cale did in his bluntly theatrical production of *The Boxing Mirror* and as Escovedo does in the gushing cover versions of Ian Hunter's "I Wish I Was Your Mother" and Iggy Pop's "I Wanna Be Your Dog," which he has performed many times in concert—as well as in the Bowie homage "Golden Bear" on his new album. Escovedo understands that the best way to do transgressive music is straight.

For most of the last couple of decades, Escovedo has been working in alt-country circles, strumming the acoustic guitar with groups such as his string quartet. Yet he started as a punk, singing in a San Francisco band called The Nuns (a group only vestigially connected to the burlesque Goths going by the same name today), the high point of whose career was playing on the bottom of a bill with the Sex Pistols in 1978, and much of the music Escovedo has made over the years has retained the spirit of that first band. Although he is sometimes associated with the cowpunk movement of the 1980s and 1990s, Escovedo has always made music more punk than cow.

Compositionally, Escovedo's songs are as simple and as formal as the Ramones'. He knows how to construct a verse with two chords, or only one—or none. Like punk guitarists, Escovedo leans heavily on fifths, near-chord constructions, to give the music qualities of incompleteness and instability. An Escovedo melody, much the same, is sometimes little more than one note—usually the fifth tone in the scale, an echo of the music's fragile harmony. Sometimes the main note of the tune is a minor third sung over a major chord (or a suggestion of a chord), an effect that adds further to the atmosphere of unease in Escovedo's work. The

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music is elegantly suited to the themes of displacement, transience, and disaffection that occupy the words.

In its textures, if not its essence, *Real Animal* is the hardest-rocking thing Escovedo has done since he played in Buick MacKane, a side-project band (named for a T. Rex song) that gigged around Escovedo's native Austin and made one album, a certain classic in the genre of Tejano garage glam, in 1997. (Titled *The Pawn Shop Years*, the Buick MacKane record is available on iTunes, and it is worth downloading just for the six-minute noise-party cover of the Stooges' "Loose.") Tony Visconti, who helped to invent the sound that *Real Animal* emulates, keeps the music brisk and gleaming.

The songs on *Real Animal*, co-written with the San Francisco singer-songwriter Chuck Prophet, reflect from a distance on Escovedo's musical life, though they fail to do that life full justice. Indeed, much of the music is slick and conventional. "Nuns Song" remembers Escovedo's musical initiation; "Chip N' Tony" recalls his transition to cowpunk with the band Rank and File in the 1980s; "Sister Lost Soul" and "Smoke" both touch on the treacherous glories of the rock 'n' roll life (the former specifically centered on the death of Jeffrey Lee Pierce, of the band Gun Club). As a kind of commentary on Escovedo's past work, as notes for future listening, the album is useful. But as an example of Escovedo's music, it is decidedly not the real animal.

The high point for me is the song that inspired the album's title, "Real as an Animal," which, in the guise of an homage to Iggy Pop, celebrates the ferocity of spirit that has fueled Escovedo's music, once nearly killed him, and now keeps him going. Although Escovedo's voice has weakened and dried from wear and disease, he remains defiant as he sings of one of his heroes, and of one of mine. ◆

Jack Goldsmith
SECRECY AND SAFETY

BUSH'S LAW: THE REMAKING OF AMERICAN JUSTICE
By Eric Lichtblau
(Pantheon, 384 pp., $26.95)

I.

In May 1940, defying a congressional ban, President Franklin D. Roosevelt secretly authorized warrantless wiretapping inside the United States. His attorney general, Robert Jackson, had ordered a halt to the wiretapping a few months earlier, after the Supreme Court made clear that the Communications Act of 1934 prohibited it. But when J. Edgar Hoover got word to Roosevelt that Jackson had blinded the FBI to German espionage activity in the United States, the president ordered Jackson to reverse his decision and to authorize wiretaps against suspected subversives. "I am convinced that the Supreme Court never intended any dictum . . . to apply to grave matters involving the defense of the nation," Roosevelt weakly reasoned, adding that it is "too late to do anything about it after sabotage, assassinations and 'fifth column' activities are completed." Jackson "had not liked this approach to the problem," the attorney general would remark in his memoir. A dozen years later he penned the most famous Supreme Court opinion delineating the limits of presidential war power. But in the minatory spring of 1940, with the Germans racing toward Paris and Dunkirk, the young attorney general acquiesced in Roosevelt's order.

Much in this episode resonates today: Roosevelt's anxiety to find terrorists hidden among civilians before they could strike without warning; his crystalline statement of the prevention doctrine; his frustration with surveillance laws designed for a different problem; and his contortion of the law, with the assistance of the Justice Department, to meet a scary threat. And yet the task of our current president (and of the president who will soon succeed him) in thwarting terror attacks is more challenging than anything that Roosevelt faced. Al Qaeda and its friends are harder to find than the Nazis, because our society is more complex, its citizens are more jealous of their liberties, and the government is more constrained by law. They are harder to deter, because they are willing to commit suicide and they have no homeland to protect. And they are more lethal, because of the spread of ever smaller and more powerful weapons and our increased reliance on vulnerable infrastructures.

For terrorists to do anything really bad to us, they must be able to communicate, to coordinate their plans, and to secure the financing necessary to see their plans through. That is why the government's ability to identify terrorists and to monitor their communications and financial transactions is vital. It is often said that modern communications technologies—the Internet, anonymous and encrypted email messages, disposable cell phones, and the like—give terrorists an asymmetrical advantage. Yet the same technological advances that help terrorists plot to deliver weapons of mass destruction can also make it easier for the government to discover and preempt terrorist plots. Since September 11, the government has aggressively exploited its technological advantages.

These advantages work best, and often only, in secret. When terrorists learn how we monitor them, they adapt to prevent detection. Unfortunately, they have learned a lot in the last seven years. As head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel from 2003 to 2004, I was "read in" to several top secret intelligence programs related to terrorist surveillance. Beginning on December 16, 2005, every one of these programs, and another one about which I knew nothing, was disclosed by the nation's leading newspapers. On that date, *The New York Times* published a story by Eric Lichtblau and James Risen about what became known as the Terrorist Surveillance Program, which was the National Security Agency's secret program of monitoring suspected terrorists' international phone calls and e-mail messages without a warrant. Over the next eight months, Lichtblau and Risen followed up this blockbuster with scoop after scoop purporting to disclose many classified details about the government's surveillance capabilities.

Prying these closely held secrets from the government and publishing them in the *Times* is an impressive journalistic feat, and Lichtblau and Risen won a Pulitzer Prize and other prestigious awards. Lichtblau has now written a book that tells a panoramic if largely familiar tale about how the Bush administration overreacted to September 11, swept up innocents, broke the law, and damaged American traditions. The most interesting aspect of the book is Lichtblau's insider account of why the *Times* decided to publish his surveillance stories, and of how the paper views its role in reporting on secret government actions to protect national security. It is not a pretty story—

Jack Goldsmith is a professor at Harvard Law School and the author of The Terror Presidency (Norton). He worked in the Bush administration from 2002 to 2004.

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not for the Bush administration, and not for the *Times*.

If secrecy is vital to surveillance, it is also dangerous, for citizens cannot hold government accountable for what they do not know, and government tends to overreach when it acts outside public scrutiny. It is not hard to see why later iterations of the warrantless wiretapping program that Robert Jackson failed to stop resulted in so many abuses. Gathering information on wires (and later in other media) is relatively simple for the government to do and relatively hard for the target to detect. It is easier and safer to wiretap someone than to conduct physical surveillance or to infiltrate his organization. Since the marginal cost of surveillance is low, resource constraints pose only a small barrier to listening in on others in the target's network for whom there is little or no suspicion of wrongdoing. Once surveillance begins, it is hard to shut off, for fear of what might be missed—a problem that grows as data storage becomes ever cheaper. And because all this happens in secret and—until 1972—without meaningful regulation or oversight, the government often goes too far and then covers up its mistakes and excesses.

In 1972, the Supreme Court ended warrantless surveillance of suspected domestic subversives, and in 1978 Congress put legal restrictions on the surveillance of foreign agents suspected of subversive activity. But the congressional restrictions are complicated, and the executive is entrusted with interpreting and enforcing them against itself in secret—a recipe for opportunism. So Congress created two other mechanisms to replicate checks and balances out of public view. The president must report important surveillance activities to the congressional intelligence committees in a classified setting; and he must seek a warrant from a secret court before listening in on many communications by foreign agents, including suspected terrorists. These checks also have their limits, for Congress and the secret court usually do not know what the president does not tell them. The whole system, in other words, depends on the executive branch's good faith in using it.

In the summer and fall of 2004, Lichtblau and Risen learned that the executive branch had been secretly skirting this system and wiretapping terrorism suspects on American soil without a warrant. The *Times* sat on the story through the presidential election, and, according to Lichtblau, killed it in December 2004. It did so, he says, because the White House insisted that the program was lawful, and that its disclosure would "do serious and perhaps irreparable harm to national security" by tipping off the terrorists to our capabilities. Lichtblau was unpersuaded by these arguments. His government sources had told him that the program had legal problems. And for Lichtblau "it was never clear what Osama bin Laden and his henchmen would gain from learning—confirming, really—that the United States spy services were listening to them."

But the editor of the *Times*, Bill Keller, reacted differently. He would later claim not to have thought much about the program's legality in the fall of 2004. But he worried a lot then about national security. "I've never had a case where the government raised such strident alarms, at such a high level, as the NSA eavesdropping program," Keller told Lichtblau. On this basis Keller decided not to run the story. "It was a close call," reports Lichtblau, but his editors felt "the concerns about the national security threat posed by public disclosure of the program held sway."

The *Times* revived the story in the autumn of 2005, according to Lichtblau, because Risen, frustrated with the paper's decision to kill his piece, had the "heretical idea" of disclosing the Terrorist Surveillance Program in his own forthcoming book about the CIA. Once the fear of being scooped by its own reporter persuaded the *Times* editors to reconsider running the story, Lichtblau and Risen did new reporting that confirmed their suspicions that the White House had been breaking the law. "There were deep concerns within the administration that the president had authorized what amounted to an illegal usurpation of power," Lichtblau concluded. "The image we'd been presented a year earlier in our meetings with the administration of a united front—with unflinching support for the program and its legality—was largely a façade. The administration, it seemed clear to me, had lied to us."

This lie, says Lichtblau, was the main reason the *Times*' editors reversed themselves. He says less about a second reason that Keller later claimed was critical. When the *Times* began to rethink running the NSA story in the fall of 2005, the White House again pushed back hard, first with a meeting hosted by the president's senior counterterrorism officials, and then with an extraordinary plea from President Bush himself. Lichtblau does not say why these meetings failed to persuade Keller and *Times* publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr., but in 2006 Keller said that his reporters had "reworked the story into a version that, we were confident, would not provide useful information to terrorists who were the targets of the eavesdropping program." And so the *Times* told the world about the Terrorist Surveillance Program.

II.

For Lichtblau, this episode vindicates the press's role as a watchdog over government. Since the shadow system of checks and balances for ensuring presidential accountability in secret had collapsed, and since the *Times* had reason to think the government had been breaking the law, it was right, in Lichtblau's view, for the *Times* to restore political accountability through reporting.

But judging what the *Times* did is really a more complicated affair. For one thing, the government had taken steps to fix its legal problems before the *Times* got the story or published it. (Lichtblau's book discusses some aspects of my own role in these efforts.) For another, the *Times*' unauthorized disclosure of the Terrorist Surveillance Program and related details about American surveillance capabilities was itself probably a crime. Most news media publications of classified information do not implicate criminal liability because the pertinent laws—especially ones in the original Espionage Act of 1917—are not drafted clearly enough, or targeted at the press with adequate precision, to survive the scrutiny that the First Amendment demands before holding journalists liable. Yet there is a law that *is* perfectly clear, which is directed at what the *Times* did in its original Terrorist Surveillance Program story and in subsequent stories about the government's surveillance capabilities.

That law is Section 798 of the U.S. Criminal Code. Section 798 grew out of a recommendation in 1946 by the Joint Congressional Committee for the Investigation of the Attack on Pearl Harbor to ban disclosure of all classified information. Congress thought this proposal too broad, but in 1950 it did enact a more modest law banning publication of what the House Judiciary Committee described as "a small category of classified matter, a category which is both vital and vulnerable to an almost unique degree." Included within this category is "communication intelligence," a term defined to mean "all procedures and methods used in the interception of communications." Section 798 says that "whoever knowingly and willfully … publishes … in any manner prejudicial to the safety

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or interest of the United States . . . any classified information . . . concerning the communication intelligence activities of the United States" shall be fined or imprisoned not more than ten years. This law is a "model of precise draftsmanship" that shows "concern for public speech" by limiting its prohibitions "to a narrow category of highly sensitive information," noted Harold Edgar and Benno Schmidt in 1973, in their definitive study of Section 798. It was supported by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (including *The New York Times*) as a reasonable national security restriction on the press, and passed the House and Senate with little controversy.

Lichtblau does not mention Section 798 in his book, but he rejects the idea that journalists should be prosecuted for reporting classified information. His view is "modeled after the independent press corps envisioned by Justice Hugo Black in the Pentagon Papers case [in 1971], when he wrote that the rights of a free press were protected in the Constitution 'so that it could bare the secrets of the government and inform the people.'" In that decision, in 1971, the Supreme Court declined to enjoin *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* from publishing the Defense Department's classified internal history of the Vietnam War, because Congress had not authorized such an injunction and the First Amendment placed a high bar on prior restraints. But the Pentagon Papers case did not say that journalists are immune from post-publication punishment. To the contrary, three justices stated that the First Amendment was not a bar to prosecutions, and at least two others implied as much. Justice White, joined by Justice Stewart, said he would have "no difficulty in sustaining convictions" of the newspapers under Section 798 even though a prior restraint was unwarranted.

To say that the *Times* and Lichtblau committed a crime is not to say that they will be prosecuted for it. The government has never prosecuted a member of the press for revealing classified information. In 2006, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales floated the possibility, but the administration has taken no public action and likely never will. In part this is because a successful prosecution would invariably reveal yet more classified information. Just as important, it would be very controversial for the government to use its most powerful coercive tools against press critics who disclosed controversial and possibly illegal government action. The legal and political battle would be monumental. There is a good chance that no jury would convict. And the process would harm the Justice Department, and also the country. This is why an administration angered by leaks and not normally shy about pushing legal prerogative has been unwilling to pull the trigger on prosecuting the *Times*.

Whether the government deploys it or not, Section 798 is still relevant to assessing what the *Times* did. Lichtblau does not explain how the publication of "vital" communications intelligence in the name of democracy can be squared with the democracy's judgment that this sort of publication is wrong and should be punished. Perhaps he would say he was engaging in civil disobedience—that what the government was doing was so bad, and its disclosure so important, that he is willing to suffer personal sanctions to vindicate higher principle. But I doubt it. Throughout his book, Lichtblau displays a surprisingly thin-skinned and even self-pitying attitude toward criticism of his work, which he likens to the "Swift boating" of John Kerry. He also complains that Justice Department investigations of his and Risen's sources have made his job harder and less rewarding.

Section 798 is relevant also for a more important reason. The government's practical inability to enforce this law against the press, and Lichtblau's

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inability to imagine why he might be criticized for disclosing sensitive classified information, raises the ancient question of who is guarding the guardians. Does the *Times* exercise its watchdog role over secret government activity wisely? Lichtblau assures us that it does, noting that the *Times* editors serve as a "built-in backstop, a check and balance" on reporters, and adding that for "the editors to even consider running a piece, we knew that there had to be a legitimate public interest that outweighed any potential harm to national security."

But despite the *Times'* delay in reporting the original surveillance story, there are many reasons to be skeptical. Saying the editors are a check on what the *Times* publishes is like saying we can trust the president to curb the excesses of his subordinates. It affords little comfort, especially since the public has no access to the process of the editors' decision-making. One wants to know precisely how the editors weigh the public interest in knowing against national security harm. Even if the editors possess the expertise to identify and to assess these trade-offs (something that is doubtful), is their judgment distorted by the pursuit of fame and profit? The separation of powers, the institution of elections, and the free press help to ensure that government's self-directed motives do not get out of hand. But there are few checks on the press itself. The most powerful constraint on the press is the marketplace of ideas—but this marketplace is designed to sort out truth, and it is no corrective when journalists irresponsibly disclose sensitive national security information. The absence of a real sanction from the government should make us worry that the press's judgments about whether publication unduly harms the national interest are skewed.

III.

These worries are borne out less by the original Terrorist Surveillance Program story than by the flood of Lichtblau–Risen stories that followed. In June 2006, for example, Lichtblau and Risen reported on a secret government program involving the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT). SWIFT is a global banking consortium based in Brussels that facilitates international financial transfers. Soon after September 11, it began providing the United States with financial information related to possible terrorist-related transfers in response to U.S. administrative subpoenas. This information is crucial in the fight against terrorism. It helps the government to disrupt terrorists' financial transfers and thus makes it harder for them to kill. And it helps to identify terrorists and their sympathizers and thus makes them easier to stop.

When the *Times* got the SWIFT story, the government again begged it not to publish, and the *Times* again went ahead. Lichtblau's explanations are revealing. He says the SWIFT program rested on a "largely untested legal theory" and was "arguably extralegal." Lichtblau is not a lawyer, and beyond quoting such conclusory judgments from anonymous sources, he does not tell us how or why he reached these conclusions. But his insinuations that the government was acting illegally are simply wrong. Of course the government was trying new and more aggressive tactics after September 11, but the SWIFT program violated no American privacy laws and is a straightforward exercise of the power that Congress gave the president in the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. These facts eventually led the *Times'* public editor, Byron Calame, to criticize the paper for running the story. Lichtblau does not mention his criticism.

Lichtblau also tries to downplay the significance of the SWIFT program for national security. He quotes from a 9/11 Commission staff report that says that "completely choking off the money to al Qaeda and affiliated terrorist groups has been essentially impossible." That is true, but the report goes on to say that the goal is not to completely cut off the money, but rather to make it harder to obtain. Lichtblau also neglects to tell his readers that the otherwise critical Final Report on the 9/11 Commission Recommendations, issued six months before his SWIFT story ran, gave the government its only A grade—an A-, to be exact—for "vigorous effort against terrorist financing." Despite the obvious importance of terrorist financing, Lichtblau finds "oblique at best" claims that his SWIFT disclosures harmed national security. "That the U.S. government was actively monitoring terrorist-financing was no secret," he reasons. Perhaps not. But how it was doing so was a secret until disclosed. Lichtblau reports that the SWIFT program helped capture an Al Qaeda associate named Hambali, the architect of the bombings in Bali in 2002. It is much less likely to work now that the *Times* has told everyone about it.

So the *Times* incorrectly evaluated both the legality of the SWIFT program and the impact on national security from its disclosure. Lichtblau implicitly responds to this criticism when he claims that the aim of the *Times* "was never to declare the program legal or illegal, effective or ineffective." Its objective was instead to "lay out the facts of the program and let people decide for themselves what they thought of it." And Lichtblau adds that the story was, "above all else, an interesting yarn about the administration's extraordinary efforts since 9/11 to stop another attack," as if its aesthetic merit were relevant to the decision to publish. This is hardly the careful exercise of judgment about whether public accountability warrants a compromise of national security that Lichtblau and the *Times* promised us. It is, instead, the casual renunciation of such judgment.

The *Times'* miscalculation of the national security impact of running this "interesting yarn" is typical of the other surveillance stories the paper ran. Lichtblau frequently insists that his stories did not endanger national security because the terrorists already knew that we were watching and listening to them. But the *Times* has never done any reporting on whether Lichtblau is right. Nor has it explained why Keller thought the stories were reported in ways that did not harm national security. If the *Times* looked into the matter with the same vigor with which it pursued the surveillance stories, it would discover that these stories have significantly harmed our national security. I say this a little awkwardly, because it is difficult for me to explain without violating my own obligation not to disclose classified information helpful to our enemies. (This is one reason why the government says so little about why certain leaks are damaging: the information necessary to do so, if revealed, would make matters worse.) But I say it also very confidently.

Some of the Lichtblau–Risen stories mentioned the successes of the operations in question. The SWIFT story noted the Hambali capture. The original Terrorist Surveillance Program story acknowledged that that program led to the disruption of a plot by an Al Qaeda agent named Iyman Faris to bring down the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as planned fertilizer bomb attacks by Al Qaeda in Great Britain. Lichtblau's own stories make clear that the terrorists do not always take full precautions in their communications. One reason that they do not do so is that the programs were, as Lichtblau never fails to point out, "secret," and thus they were not known generally even if they were known to some. Yet terrorists naturally ramp up their precautions and make themselves harder to

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find when government successes under a secret surveillance program are reported in the newspaper.

Lichtblau and his colleagues did not just report on the fact that the United States was aggressively tracking terrorists. They disclosed, much more damagingly, many operational details about how it did so. They reported not only the details of the SWIFT program, but also on data mining and pattern analysis of telephone and e-mail information, the government's listening in on purely international communications that "transit" through the United States, the close cooperation of private telecommunications firms in these efforts, and government analysis of ATM transactions, credit card purchases, wire payments, and more. I am not permitted to say which of those stories are true, but I can say that the true ones involved matters that were unknown to our enemies, and therefore gave the government a big advantage in tracking them. Their disclosure helped terrorists to avoid forms of communication that we were good at monitoring, and instead to switch to channels of communication in which we lack comparative advantage.

And then there are the more diffuse harms caused by the *Times*' revelations. Once the highly classified programs were disclosed, it became hard for the government to explain its actions without revealing—sometimes inadvertently—related surveillance activities. To take one example, Lichtblau reports that in the course of discussing the Terrorist Surveillance Program, former Senator Bob Graham, who was once the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, revealed that many purely international communications—from, say, Afghanistan to Indonesia—"transited" through the United States in ways that could easily be detected by the American government. This revelation, Lichtblau says, induced the *Times* "to probe more deeply into areas that were regarded as off-limits just a few days earlier," and led the paper to report on yet more detailed secret surveillance techniques.

The *Times* also reported on private industry's secret cooperation with the government. Such cooperation is an essential element of our national surveillance capability, and its disclosure has dimmed the willingness of corporations to help. Lichtblau notes, for example, that his SWIFT program revelations diminished the banking consortium's cooperation. And it is well known that foreign intelligence services are ever more wary about sharing information and engaging in joint intelligence operations—including, presumably, surveillance operations—because American secrets tend to end up on the front pages of American newspapers.

Last year Michael McConnell, the national intelligence director, declared that public discussion of American surveillance capabilities "means that some Americans are going to die, because we do this mission unknown to the bad guys because they're using a process that we can exploit and the more we talk about it, the more they will go with an alternative means." McConnell is imprecise here: we cannot now say for sure that we will be hit again, or that the surveillance stories will be a contributing cause. It is more accurate to say that the stories made it easier for terrorists to plan and to execute attacks, and in that sense endangered the physical safety of Americans.

But if McConnell went too far, so too does Lichtblau when he calls McConnell's claim a "startling assertion" that represents a "philosophy antithetical not only to a free press, but to a free country." McConnell was not attacking a free press; he was merely describing the consequences of the exercise of its freedom. It is not startling, nor is it antithetical to a free press and a free country, nor is it demagoguery, to acknowledge that public discussion of the government's once-secret surveillance techniques in a war that depends on stopping terrorists before they strike will help the bad guys, and will likely result in more people dying than would otherwise be the case. It is simply to state the realities of terrorism and counter-terrorism. Lichtblau's failure to acknowledge these realities, and his suggestion that doing so is somehow un-American, reflects a flawed understanding of both the First Amendment and national security, and exacerbates concerns that the press cannot be trusted to get the balance right.

IV.

My criticism of *The New York Times* is not meant to downplay the dangers of executive branch secrecy, or to deny that press scrutiny of secret government activity is important to keeping government accountable. Fear of leaks causes national security officials to think twice about what they do, and deters them from doing things that they should not do. The problem is that the press operates with its own imperatives and with a romantic conception of itself and under few real constraints, and sometimes it publishes stories that harm national security while furthering little public interest. How can we maintain the virtues of a vigorous press, but minimize the disclosure of secrets that should remain secret?

ANTHONY RUSSO

The answer to this large question lies with the executive branch of government. Many people think that the executive branch should crack down more on leakers, because the regularity of leaks without sanction legitimizes leaking and leads to more. The Bush administration has tried to punish those who leak details of its surveillance and interrogation programs, but it has had a hard time identifying them—a difficulty that will only grow if, as seems likely, Congress enacts a new shield law to protect journalists from disclosing their sources. And even when leakers are discovered, it is hard to prosecute them, for many of the same reasons that it is hard to prosecute members of the press—poorly drafted laws and fear of disclosing leaks.

Yet the absence of sanctions is not the real problem. The real problem, and the source of many of the most harmful leaks in the past few years, is the perception within the government of illegitimate activity. Secret surveillance activities that began in 2001 did not leak until after a legitimacy crisis had already developed, beginning in June 2004, around the Abu Ghraib scandal and the leaked interrogation memos. Lichtblau explains that it was the Terrorist Surveillance Program's circumvention of checks and balances, and the attendant anxiety about the program's legality, that led people inside the government to tell him about it. By contrast, the secret surveillance court that the administration bypassed issues thousands of warrants each year, many of them newsworthy—and yet the court's work never leaks, because the process is widely viewed as legitimate: expressly sanctioned by Congress, supervised by Article III judges pursuant to known rules, and reported publicly and regularly by the executive.

A root cause of the perception of illegitimacy inside the government that led to leaking (and then to occasional irresponsible reporting) is, ironically, excessive government secrecy. "When everything is classified, then nothing is classified," Justice Stewart famously said in his Pentagon Papers opinion, "and the system becomes one to be disregarded by the cynical or the careless, and to be

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manipulated by those intent on self-protection or self-promotion." And he added that "the hallmark of a truly effective internal security system would be the maximum possible disclosure," noting that "secrecy can best be preserved only when credibility is truly maintained."

The Bush administration defied these precepts and suffered as a result. Instead of employing the secrecy stamp sparingly, it did so extravagantly. Instead of engaging the press and public about the disclosable aspects of what it was up to, the Bush administration shut off the press, heightening its suspicion and mistrust. Instead of working with Congress or the secret surveillance court to update its surveillance powers after September 11, it took a go-it-alone approach. The administration kept the very existence of the program from all but the secret court's chief judge, Lichtblau reports, and gave congressional briefings only to the congressional leadership (the "gang of eight") rather than to both intelligence committees, many of whose members would later complain that they were briefed incompletely. The administration even short-circuited normal procedures inside the executive branch. It kept the number-two person in the Justice Department out of the loop. And it didn't share legal opinions related to the program with the National Security Agency that was running the program.

The secrecy of the Bush administration was genuinely excessive, and so it was self-defeating. One lesson of the last seven years is that the way for government to keep important secrets is not to draw the normal circle of secrecy tighter. Instead the government should be as open as possible, and when secrecy is truly necessary it must organize and conduct itself in a way that is beyond reproach, even in a time of danger. In the end, not Congress, nor the courts, nor the press can force the government to follow these precepts. Only the president can do that. ◆

Edward L. Glaeser
AUTO-EMANCIPATION

TRAFFIC:
WHY WE DRIVE THE WAY WE DO
(AND WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT US)
By Tom Vanderbilt
(Knopf, 403 pp., $24.95)

Few if any man-made contraptions have shaped America as much as the internal combustion engine. Eighty-seven percent of American workers drive to their jobs, either alone or in a carpool. Eighteen percent of the average American family's spending goes to transportation, mostly for cars and gasoline. While *Homo sapiens* has spent most of its existence fighting to fill its belly, Americans today spend a lot more on cars than on food.

Just a century ago, before the rise of cars and trucks, American cities huddled around ports and rail yards. New York's needle trades grew up in the shadow of the clipper ships that brought cotton; Chicago's stockyards slaughtered cows by the millions a few feet from Armour's refrigerated rail cars. People mostly walked to work, and lived in small, often self-built homes close to the firms that employed them. Then, in the twentieth century, we rebuilt our urban landscapes around a new transportation technology.

Cars turned the early trickle of streetcar suburbs into an exurban torrent. Shopping malls with plentiful parking replaced downtowns as places to play and to purchase. Trucks enabled companies to give up the older transport infrastructure in the urban core; today more than three-quarters of the jobs in most metropolitan areas are more than five miles away from the city center. America built new cities with multi-lane highways and broad boulevards that suit the car the way the tangled streets of Jerusalem's Old City suit foot traffic. Cheap transportation enabled tens of millions of Americans to move to once-inaccessible places, such as California and Texas, with splendid climates, or at least with affordable snow-less living.

The car's weak heel, of course, is its dependence on petroleum, which is neither infinitely abundant nor environmentally innocent. Approximately one-fifth of America's carbon dioxide emissions is associated with private driving. In the years ahead, environmentalists could quite possibly get their wish that Americans pay for the ecological damage caused by the car through gas taxes as high as those that have long reduced European driving. Even without a carbon tax, gas prices have soared as demand from vast and growing regions such as China and India has collided with static oil supply. If our society decides to act on the threat of global warming with a carbon tax, or some other carbon control system, then gas prices will rise even further.

What would happen to our car-based world if the price of gasoline hits $10 per gallon? That number may be extreme, but it is not all that fanciful. A few weeks ago I paid $9 per gallon to tote my toddlers around Belgium. (Thank goodness it's a small country.) Some environmentally inclined urbanists have rushed to the view that rising gas prices will take us back to nineteenth-century urban densities, hopefully with a little less cholera. Since the belief that people respond to incentives is at the heart of the economist's catechism, I certainly share their view that rising gas prices will do something to behavior. But I am less confident that even extreme prices will mean an end to cars and car-based living.

There is much wisdom in Tom Vanderbilt's assertion in *Traffic*, a smart and comprehensive analysis of the everyday act of driving, that "it will be easier to remove the internal combustion engine from the car than it will to remove the driver." While rising gas prices will surely reduce miles traveled and increase the appeal of high-density dwellings, the main effect of expensive petroleum will no doubt be to increase automotive fuel efficiency.

A massive rise in gas prices would seem to create an enormous incentive to give up driving altogether. The average American family earns about $60,000 per year and buys about 1,000 gallons of gas to drive about 20,000 miles. At $2 per gallon, this was almost 4 percent of such a family's average expenditures. At $4 per gallon, they are out an extra $2,000 per year, which is plenty but perhaps not enough to uproot and move to midtown. At $10 per gallon, by contrast, they would be spending more than 20 percent of their after-tax income on gasoline—a truly mind-boggling figure. This family, which has plenty of other expenses, will have to do something.

The easiest and most likely response to high gas prices is to buy a high mileage car. If that family switches to a fifty-mile-per-gallon Prius, then a fivefold increase in gas prices will mean only a $2,000 increase in gas spending. Moreover, as

Edward L. Glaeser is Fred and Eleanor Glimp Professor of Economics at Harvard and director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government.

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Black Listed Cancer Treatment Could Save Your Life

Baltimore, MD— As unbelievable as it seems the key to stopping many cancers has been around for over 30 years. Yet it has been banned. Blocked. And kept out of your medicine cabinet by the very agency designed to protect your health—the FDA.

In 1966, the senior oncologist at a prominent New York hospital rocked the medical world when he developed a serum that **"shrank cancer tumors in 45 minutes!"** 90 minutes later they were gone... Headlines hit every major paper around the world. Scientists and researchers applauded. Time and again this life saving treatment worked miracles, but the FDA ignored the research and hope he brought and shut him down.

You read that right. He was not only shut down—but also forced out of the country where others benefited from his discovery. That was 39 years ago. How many other treatments have they been allowed to hide? Just as in the case of Dr. Burton's miracle serum these too go unmentioned.

Two-Nutrient Cancer Breakthrough...

Decades ago, European research scientist Dr. Johanna Budwig, a six-time Nobel Award nominee, discovered a totally natural formula that not only protects against the development of cancer, but people all over the world who have been diagnosed with incurable cancer and sent home to die have actually benefited from her research—and now lead normal lives.

After 30 years of study, Dr. Budwig discovered that the blood of seriously ill cancer patients was deficient in certain substances and nutrients. Yet, healthy blood always contained these ingredients. It was the lack of these nutrients that allowed cancer cells to grow wild and out of control.

By simply eating a combination of two natural and delicious foods (found on page 134) not only can cancer be prevented—but in case after case it was actually healed! "Symptoms of cancer, liver dysfunction, and diabetes were completely alleviated." Remarkably, what Dr. Budwig discovered was a totally natural way for eradicating cancer.

However, when she went to publish these results so that everyone could benefit—**she was blocked by manufacturers with heavy financial stakes!** For over 10 years now her methods have proved effective—yet she is denied publication—blocked by the giants who don't want you to read her words.

What's more, the world is full of expert minds like Dr. Budwig who have pursued cancer remedies and come up with remarkable natural formulas and diets that work for hundreds and thousands of patients. *How to Fight Cancer & Win* author William Fischer has studied these methods and revealed their secrets for you—so that you or someone you love may be spared the horrors of conventional cancer treatments.

As early as 1947, Virginia Livingston, M.D., isolated a cancer-causing microbe. She noted that every cancer sample analyzed (whether human or other animal) contained it.

This microbe—a bacteria that is actually in each of us from birth to death—multiplies and promotes cancer when the immune system is weakened by disease, stress, or poor nutrition. Worst of all, the microbes secrete a special hormone protector that short-circuits our body's immune system—allowing the microbes to grow undetected for years. No wonder so many patients are riddled with cancer by the time it is detected. But there is hope even for them...

Six-time Nobel Nominee's Two-Nutrient Cancer Breakthrough Revealed

Turn to page 82 of *How to Fight Cancer & Win* for the delicious diet that can help stop the formation of cancer cells and shrink tumors.

They walked away from traditional cancer treatments...and were healed! Throughout the pages of *How to Fight Cancer & Win* you'll meet real people who were diagnosed with cancer—suffered through harsh conventional treatments—turned their backs on so called modern medicine—only to be miraculously healed by natural means! Here is just a sampling of what others have to say about the book.

"I bought *How to Fight Cancer & Win* and this has to be the greatest book I've ever read. I have had astounding results from the easy to understand knowledge found in this book. My whole life has improved drastically and I have done so much for many others. The information goes far beyond the health thinking of today." —*Hugh M.*

"I can't find adequate words to describe my appreciation of your work in providing *How to Fight Cancer & Win*. You had to do an enormous amount of research to bring this vast and most important knowledge to your readers.

My doctor found two tumors on my prostate with a high P.S.A. He scheduled a time to surgically remove the prostate, but I canceled the appointment. Instead I went on the diet discussed in the book combined with another supplement. Over the months my P.S.A. has lowered until the last reading was one point two." —*Duncan M.*

"In my 55 years as a Country Family Physician, I have never read a more 'down to earth,' practical resume of cancer prevention and treatments, than in this book. It needs to be studied worldwide for the prevention of cancer by all researchers who are looking for a cure." —*Edward S., M.D.*

"As a cancer patient who has been battling lymphatic cancer on and off for almost three years now, I was very pleased to stumble across *How to Fight Cancer & Win*. The book was inspiring, well-written and packed with useful information for any cancer patient looking to maximize his or her chances for recovery." —*Romany S.*

"I've been incorporating Dr. Budwig's natural remedy into my diet and have told others about it. Your book is very informative and has information I've never heard about before (and I've read many books on the cancer and nutrition link). Thanks for the wonderful information." —*Molly G.*

Don't waste another minute. Claim your book today and you will be one of the lucky few who no longer have to wait for cures that get pushed "underground" by big business and money hungry giants.

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Vanderbilt's comment suggests, the automobile industry will continue to innovate as gas prices rise. The potential for more fuel-efficient cars is one of the most important reasons why public policy should not try to reduce energy costs: high prices ensure that the engineers at Honda stay busy building a better hybrid.

Middle-class Americans will drive a little less and the prices of houses far out on the exurban frontier will fall a bit relative to central-city residences. Public-transit usage is already up in many metropolitan areas. But that does not mean that Americans will desert their suburbs. The housing stock is durable and valuable, and all those shiny new homes on the edges of Atlanta and Phoenix are not going to be abandoned anytime soon. As long as those homes are occupied, the people living in them will drive. They have to drive. Attempts to service these low-density areas with rail are enormously expensive undertakings that can never be justified on the basis of ridership.

Americans, after all, have good reasons to like their cars. The average public-transit commute in the United States is forty-eight minutes, about double the average car commute. We might be able to reduce emissions and highway deaths by moving back toward nineteenth-century transport modes, but we will do so only with a huge increase in travel times. So Americans are likely to stay behind the wheels of their cars—and they were joined by fifteen million more Chinese cars in 2007 alone. And all those drivers mean, among other things, that Vanderbilt's book is likely to remain relevant well into the new century. The book is a shrewd tour of the much-experienced but little-understood world of driving. For almost three hundred well-researched pages, Vanderbilt takes us through the automotive insights of social scientists and transportation engineers.

Driving is such a common, mundane activity that most of us forget how strange it is to get into a two-ton hulk of steel and high technology and hurtle down ribbons of highway. After all, most of our day-to-day experiences involve decisions made over long periods of time with stakes that are often no higher than where we want to eat lunch. Driving, by contrast, involves split-second decision-making in which our lives are almost constantly on the line. And the semi-subconscious nature of driving leads Vanderbilt to the counterintuitive conclusion that dangerous roads may in fact be safer. When roads are straight and simple, then drivers get complacent, which actually makes things more dangerous. But a slight bend in the road or the right road hazard can make drivers pay more attention.

Vanderbilt's views are a more moderate take on the Peltzman effect. Thirty years ago, Sam Peltzman, a former teacher of mine at the University of Chicago, achieved academic immortality for presenting evidence suggesting that seatbelts cost lives. Peltzman argued that seatbelts cause drivers to take more risks, and that those risks more than offset the direct effect of seatbelts on lives lost. While later evidence has challenged Peltzman's take on seatbelts, his basic intuition about safety is surely correct. Whenever some aspect of driving gets safer, drivers somewhat offset this safety by taking more risks.

Another unusual aspect of driving is its anonymity. In most of our social interactions, our identities are clear and obvious, and this keeps our darker side in check. In non-anonymous settings, people behave with more civility and generosity. I wouldn't want to have a rant in a restaurant that could show up on YouTube. But our cars mask us as well as anything the Lone Ranger ever wore, and our highways involve millions of one-shot anonymous interactions. No wonder highways sometimes feel like a Hobbesian free-for-all.

The fact that civil society ends at the on-ramp creates challenges for highway design. Vanderbilt illustrates these problems with an extensive discussion of lane merges. In polite society, it would be relatively easy to punish people who wait until the last minute to get out of a lane that is coming to an end, but on the highway last-minute movers get away scot-free. Vanderbilt teaches us about the "late merge" system, which respects the human tendency to behave badly, and asks everyone to stay in their lane until it closes. At that point the two lanes merge and drivers are instructed to take their turn merging. Apparently this works better than traditional lane-merge systems in many settings.

There are other significant anomalies about driving. Our relationship with the government changes drastically when we take to the roads. In the rest of our lives, we live in a world where property is private and the police are a benign force that protects us from rowdy teenagers. But a trip down our highways, by contrast, can seem like a visit to the old Soviet Union. Everything is owned by the government, and speed limits are set so that pretty much everyone is always guilty, just like back in the USSR. It is certainly the only circumstance in my life in which the sight of a police car fills me with dread.

Vanderbilt's book reminds us, though, that the public servants who oversee the roads are hardly as hapless or malignant as the old Soviet apparatchiks. Transport engineers come off as smart, innovative people who are constantly trying to make the roads a little bit safer. Vanderbilt provides a wonderful series of vignettes about the Dutch transportation guru Hans Monderman, a father of "psychological traffic calming," which is the art of making drivers in crowded areas slow down. Monderman eschewed speed bumps and street signs in favor of the stuff of neighborhood life—sculptures, children's bicycles, and unmarked roundabouts that forced drivers to be on guard. The result was a drastic reduction in accidents.

But just because there are plenty of competent highway experts out there does not mean that our transport policy is in good shape. It is an odd feature of American politics that we are going to spend a lot of time over the next six months talking about health care and almost no time talking about transporta-

Malice

Oily, wily.
Whip-tailed.

Fairy-handed, reaching in
to skim the soul's fat.

Rat in the mouth of the man
who calls you *nigger*
as we exit the cab.

Making its nest of shreds in my belly
as I scream back.

Whiskered, feverish.
Or maybe winged, maybe

beaked—ravening over the suffering, glad

for the shiny scraps, gleeful.
Self-lovely thrill

of the higher reaches of air—

then getting beyond even pleasure.
Just doing the necessary

work of creating
(mite-riddled, death-mottled)

the hell down there.

KIM ADDONIZIO

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tion. Most younger people spend much more money and time on transportation than they do on their health. The government has been deeply involved in the transit sector since George Washington was president of the Potomack Canal Company. Driving involves social costs—congestion, road accidents, pollution, road depreciation—that are not automatically internalized by drivers. Unless we move to a world of completely private roads, which is awfully hard to imagine, this means that there will be plenty of scope for good government policy.

Vanderbilt gives short shrift to the pollution problems of the car, which seems fairly reasonable, since oceans of ink have been spilled on how to clean up our air and fix the world's fever. The most natural means of reducing carbon emissions from driving is to have an appropriate carbon tax on petroleum (and on every other form of carbon-emitting energy, for that matter). If we want to make sure that this tax does not turn into just another revenue source for the state, the taxes can be returned to taxpayers on a per capita basis.

The thornier problem is how to reduce the environmental costs of pollution in places where the American government's writ doesn't run, most notably India and China. One approach to their carbon emissions is to offer incentives to these places to impose their own carbon taxes. A second approach is to subsidize research in fuel efficiency and just give away the results of that research. A multibillion-dollar program that gives cash rewards to big energy innovation offers a way of using the human tendency to respond to incentives to help reduce energy use.

Vanderbilt is more interested in the problems of traffic congestion and accidents. Unfortunately, reducing one of these problems can exacerbate the other. Twenty years ago, the Harvard economist Julio Rotemberg wrote an elegant paper showing that drivers increase congestion by leaving too much space between themselves and the car ahead of them. But while less space between cars speeds up commutes, it also increases the rate of accidents. Conversely, Vanderbilt tells us about a lot of neat tricks that reduce accidents in urban areas by slowing cars down. This saves lives, but it increases congestion.

One way of reducing traffic is to lay down more asphalt, but Vanderbilt concludes that this is a false panacea. One of the iron laws of transportation is that "more roads lead to more traffic." We currently ration our roads with traffic delays, so as we add more roads, people will drive more. Vanderbilt also reminds us that "adding more land is a process of diminishing returns," because highways become less efficient as they grow. We have built more and more roads, and still travel times increase. The Texas Transport Institute estimates that Americans are spending 4.2 billion hours a year in traffic delays. An average American spends 438 hours a year, more than ten normal work weeks, in travel time.

Vanderbilt touts freeway entrance-ramp metering as a means of congestion control. It is almost paradoxical that we can speed up highways by slowing down the rate of entry onto them, but it is true. A famous Minnesota experiment turning on and off the freeway ramp meters showed that with the meters, freeways were able to handle more cars at higher speeds with substantially fewer accidents.

As an economist, I am inevitably drawn to using the price mechanism to regulate the flow of traffic. In the half-century since William Vickrey first pushed congestion pricing, the idea has moved into the mainstream. Americans seem to think that the right to drive at no cost was slipped into the Bill of Rights, perhaps as part of the penumbra of the Second Amendment, but this makes no sense. If you do not ration something by price, then it gets rationed by queue. All that time spent slowly trudging in traffic is pure social waste. It would be far better to follow London and Singapore and embrace the principle that people should pay for the costs that their driving imposes on other drivers, especially in big cities.

The enemies of congestion pricing like to argue that it is regressive, but a die-hard socialist such as "Red" Ken Livingstone would hardly put forward a policy aimed at hurting London's poorest. In that city, as in most of the world, it is the rich who drive and the poor who take buses. By charging drivers, the poorer bus-riders gained twice. They got faster commutes, and Livingstone used the congestion charge revenues to improve public transit. If there is a single American metropolis where people should face an added charge for driving, it is New York, but Mayor Bloomberg's valiant fight for congestion pricing died in the committee rooms of the State Assembly in Albany. There is always going to be plenty of political opposition to charging for something that now seems to be free. The irony, of course, is that congestion pricing promises to reduce the now-exorbitant time costs of driving in downtown Manhattan. The London experience was that congestion pricing was politically unpopular right up to the day it was imposed, and then drivers suddenly realized that they liked facing less traffic.

Spreading traffic more evenly over commute times offers some of the biggest gains in driving efficiency. If we charged higher tolls for driving during peak hours, when freeways are most crowded, and lower tolls for driving off-peak, then some people would be induced to commute during times when there are fewer drivers. It is better to use our existing roads more efficiently than to just mindlessly build more highways.

Vanderbilt is particularly exercised by the almost forty thousand people who die in traffic fatalities each year in the United States alone. Few wars over the past thirty years have been able to match the car in lethality. Pro-safety interventions that lull us into a false sense of security are the mindless approach to traffic safety—analogous to fighting congestion by building more highways. Vanderbilt makes a strong case that increasing attention on the road is a smarter path toward safer streets. In the safety arena, using stronger incentives means harsher penalties for drunk or risky driving. We have made great strides in fighting drunk driving since the 1950s, when the sight of a drunk behind the wheel of a Buick seemed like a great joke. The continuing flow of deaths on the road, however, reminds us that there is much left to be done.

America is a car-based society. There is no point in pretending otherwise, even with the price of gas soaring. All those cars are unlikely to disappear any time soon. If anything, the vast increases in car ownership in India and China are just making it more important that we continue to address the large problems that accompany the car-given gifts of speed and autonomy.

I grew up on the subway, and like many urbanists I hope that more people will take public transportation. Yet it is pure fantasy to think that the majority of Americans are likely to give up their cars anytime soon. Higher gas prices will lead to more fuel-efficient cars long before we see a wholesale abandonment of car-based suburban living. The car is here to stay, and transportation policy should try to make driving faster, safer, and less environmentally harmful. Tom Vanderbilt's book is a balanced and instructive discussion on how to improve our policies toward the inexorable car. ◆

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Simon Blackburn

TRUTH'S CAPER

BEYOND THE HOAX: SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE
By Alan Sokal
(Oxford University Press, 465 pp. $34.95)

Every reader of this magazine is likely to have heard of the "Sokal hoax," the most celebrated academic escapade of our time. Everyone is also likely to know the story in outline: how in 1996 the radical "postmodernist" journal *Social Text* published an article submitted by Alan Sokal, a mathematical physicist at New York University, with the mouthwatering title "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity." Sokal then revealed the article to be a spoof, a tissue of nonsense that he had painstakingly assembled in order to parody the portentous rubbish that flew under the colors of postmodernism. By publishing Sokal's submission, the emperors of that tendency revealed themselves to be as naked as the rest of academia had always suspected, and with this one coup Sokal himself became the toast of the town, a celebrity, a hero of the resistance.

Since then, he and others have written extensively about the hoax and its significance. Some have attempted to defend the editors of *Social Text*, but they could not do much to stop the laughter. Some pursed their lips at the impropriety of hoaxing, but ridicule is a good weapon. Most thought that the editors had brought it on themselves. Sokal himself has written numerous essays, and also a book about it, with Jean Bricmont (*Impostures intellectuelles*, published in America in 1998 as *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*). His new book brings together ten essays, beginning with a thoroughly annotated text of the hoax submission itself. Most of these essays have been published at various times since the hoax came out, and the hoax itself, in all its delicious pottiness, is easily available on the Web.

Simon Blackburn is the Professor of Philosophy in the University of Cambridge. His new book, How to Read Hume, will be published by Granta in August.

For dedicated followers of the aftermath of Sokal's useful mischief, there may be a sense of déjà vu here. Indeed, Sokal begins his preface somewhat defensively: "I have a visceral distaste for books that have been confected by pasting together a collection of loosely connected, previously published essays.... So the reader may legitimately wonder: Am I not now publishing just such a compilation?" The answer, he assures us, is that he is not, because the essays form a coherent whole. I expect most authors of collections feel the same, viscerally or otherwise.

But the more pressing problem is that the kind of postmodernism that was Sokal's special target is now widely held to belong to yesterday. Before September 11, the story goes, academe allowed its "anything goes" tendency to grow unchecked. With long prosperity, the disappearance of the Cold War, and the lack of any great causes to substitute for it, a certain playfulness—an ironic, aesthetic, and disengaged attitude to life—was quite tolerable. This was history's leisure time. We did not need too much self-scrutiny, and certainly not nervous and serious books about who we are and what we stand for and where we may be heading. The relativist could hold court as the lord of misrule. You disagree with me? Whatever. That's your view, and who's to say? I expect it is true for you.

It didn't do to thump the table or insist too much: philosophers, it was supposed, had taught us to see any such exhibition of critical reason as nothing more than a bid for power, a rhetorical trick for imposing ourselves on others, and with such bad manners, or worse. Especially it would not do if the ones who were being thumped at were victims of the colonial past, or descendants anxious to claim the status of victim. In that sacred sector, respect was the order of the day, even if it meant smiling politely at creationist timetables of earth history, Hindu versions of science, homeopathic medicine, and any other stumbling pre-scientific attempt at understanding the world. In fact, the only proper targets of disrespect were those "metaphysical prigs," as Richard Rorty liked to call them, who wanted to keep the inverted commas off words such as truth, reason, or knowledge.

Relativism can certainly go along with complacency, and I think it is fair to say that even philosophers more serious than Rorty were tainted by that. The philosophy of the right, mainly market triumphalism, is of course an old friend, and still survives, even if it now looks a little battered; but consider in this connection also "political liberalism," the heading under which John Rawls could imagine the peoples of the world willingly leaving their ideological and cultural differences at the door and coming into the political arena carrying only that which they hold in common. What they had in common turned out to be a birthright of reason sufficient all by itself to enchant them with a nice liberal democratic constitution, amazingly like that of the United States, or perhaps western Europe. Conflict could be talked through and violence abated. When the philosophers explained the right way to live, everyone would fall happily into line. Innocent times.

But no longer. The present decade is different. The United States has had its wake-up call, and may have others just as loud. It has been told, brutally, that disagreement matters, and that if our grasp of what we need to defend is feeble enough, there are people out there only too happy to wrest it away from us. It has reacted even more brutally to that alarm by declaring war on people who had nothing to do with it in the first place, and then conducting that war with counterproductive barbarity. It has learned that there is not much common reason that is everyone's birthright—that when disagreement comes, people cannot afford to shrug.

There are times when we have to do better than "whatever" and "anything goes." A country needs to understand what is good, and also what is not good, about its preferred ways of living. It needs to understand what is good, and why, about its science, history, and self-understandings; and it even needs to understand what was good, and why, about the politics and the ethics that it may have, let us hope temporarily, abandoned. When we behold a postmodernist White House where the president and his advisers sneer at the "reality-based community," then carnival time in academe is well and truly over.

I greatly enjoyed Sokal's hoax. There is little in academic life more irritating than people pretending to understand things that they do not understand. Who cannot want to explode the long lines of intellectuals posing as having a close acquaintance with iconic items of twentieth-century progress—

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relativity theory, of course, but also quantum mechanics, set theory, Gödel's theorems, Tarski's work on formal logic, and much else? Custard pies are exactly what is needed.

Still, I found myself not quite as wholehearted as some of my colleagues. I felt a little guilty about laughing, even if the joke was a good one. I had edited a journal myself, and so I found it easier to put myself in the position of the hapless editors of *Social Text*. As Sokal himself acknowledges, they had generally left-wing or progressive political views. They believed, rightly, that people do not share those views or act upon them because of an inclination to take too much for granted, a tendency to suppose that too many things about the way we live are fixed and unalterable; that dominant stories, about the virtues of the market, or of democracy, or about the place of women, or the causes of poverty, or the truths of religion, are unquestionable; or that our way is the only way, or that we always know best. The editors thought, correctly, that such complacency impeded progress.

They also believed, probably rather vaguely, like most of us, that twentieth-century developments in science showed examples that shook off deeply entrenched complacencies or prejudices. They had heard of Einstein, and knew something of the destruction of the classical notion of simultaneity, or of the discovery of relativity of motion to an observer; they might even have heard of Max Born or Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, and the idea that, at the fundamental quantum level, what is observed is a function of whether it is observed, so that there is no legitimate notion of how things stand independently of whether they are observed. This has been contested, certainly; and Einstein himself ran a long and ultimately rather futile campaign against it, just as he did against the indeterministic implications of quantum theory. But both are still center stage in the philosophy of physics. And most importantly, the editors, and postmodernist writers in general, were well aware of the dominant authority of science in every part of our culture. What humanists say does not much matter, but what the men in the white coats say goes. They were probably, like the rest of us, somewhat ambivalent about that—on the one hand mistrusting the absolute sway of science, on the other hand eager for some of its gloss.

ANTHONY RUSSO

Against this background, in came a paper by an accredited mathematical physicist teaching at a very highly regarded university. And the whole tendency of the article was to confirm the view that developments in science, right up to the contemporary scene, could indeed hold messages that were useful for their radical hopes. The science was presented as confirming for them that, more than we might suppose, things lie in the eye of the beholder. And that was important to the aims of the journal. True, the editors cannot have understood a lot of the alleged physics, partly because there was actually nothing there to understand. Still, if a professor at NYU couldn't get that stuff right, who could?

I do not find it so surprising that they ran with it. Should they have had it refereed by mathematicians, physicists, and set theorists? I am not sure. It is better to do so, no doubt, and I expect that the poor editors have woken up every morning since wishing that they had. But there are costs of time and effort in finding referees, and as often as not you end up with two things to judge rather than just one. Anyway, it was the purported message of the physics, not the details, that mattered to their interest in it. And you do trust academics to get their own subjects right. When I edited *Mind*, if a paper came in from a well-regarded historian in an eminent department showing, for instance, that various facts about Hobbes's political experiences in Venice explain his attachment to some doctrine in political philosophy, I would have had to estimate the political philosophy myself. But I might well have taken Hobbes's presence in Venice as given: surely any halfway decent historian would not have developed the point if he hadn't got that bit right? Almost certainly I would not have had the history refereed, even if I had known whom to approach.

I also found something a shade distasteful about the position of those triumphalists who were crowing about the hoax. Very few of them would be able to make head or tail of a page of any contemporary physics journal. So when Sokal tells them that some sentences in his hoax were physically perfectly correct, while others were egregiously false or nonsensical, they have to take him on trust, and this alone puts them in a rather poor position from which to crow over the hapless others who took all of them, including the wrong ones, on trust.

And finally, we might reflect that gullibility is not the prerogative of wacky postmodernists. Indeed, there is a phenomenon with its own name, "the Dr. Fox effect," arising from an experiment conducted back in 1973. Fox was not a doctor but an actor. The experimenters created a meaningless lecture on "Mathematical Game Theory as Applied to Physician Education," larded with double talk, neologisms, non sequiturs, and contradictions. Fox delivered this nonsense to three separate audiences of medical professionals, psychologists, and graduate students, but with humor and a pleasant and confident air. The evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. Bullshit really does beat brains, worldwide.

Still, if you do not know how to tell a counterfeit coin from a true one, you should not go around pretending that you do. And this was not the worst vice of the postmodernists. Far worse was their penchant for unintelligible writing, for drawing wild inferences, and for throwing around irresponsible claims, such as the wonderfully absurd assertions that before tuberculosis was identified you could not die of it, or that Newton's laws of motion make up a rape manual. These absurdities are also in Sokal's sights, and compared with them the pathetic conceit of decorating writings with a pretense of acquaintance with mathematics and physics is relatively minor.

It is natural to say that postmodernist writings displayed a contempt for truth, and in several of these essays Sokal skillfully defends a fairly modest kind of scientific realism, reaffirming the claims of science to give us the truth, or at least to put us on its track. And he is justly scornful of postmodernist philosophers who appeared to denigrate truth: Richard's Rorty's old campaign to substitute "solidarity" for truth is, quite rightly, a particular target. Gaining the agreement of our fellows is not the same as getting things right. It only begins to approximate to it if our fellows are trained in observation, evidence, and theory—and even then agreement stands ready to be struck down by the arrival of yet further observation, evidence, and theory in turn.

Sokal is good at this, and although he disclaims any special philosophical expertise, he writes well about the philosophy of science. He is good at articulating a basic epistemology for science, against the skepticism of Karl Popper as much as the wilder constructivist writings that followed him. Yet Sokal is certainly not

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the kind of warrior in the "science wars" who disdains each and every attempt to say something interesting about the historical, social, and cultural matrix within which science has taken place. My own view is that science education would do well to pay far more attention to this context than it typically does.

I like to illustrate this with an event in my own daughter's education. She came back furious one day from her very good (and very expensive) school, announcing she was fed up with science. I asked why. Apparently the class had been told to solve some equations governing the motion of the pendulum. In particular they had been told to use the equation of potential energy at the top of the swing with kinetic energy at the bottom, to calculate the velocity at the bottom of the swing. I asked what the problem was. She said she didn't see what this so-called energy was. I asked if she had raised this with the teacher. She said she had, and had been told to get on and solve the equations. She never pursued any science again.

Yet if you look at the history of the pendulum from Galileo's work at the end of the sixteenth century, you will find a wonderful story of ingenuity, of mathematics, of contested observations, of problems of trade and the need to find the longitude, of the gradual evolution of the calculus, of debates about whether "force" should be thought of as proportional to velocity or square velocity (which set Newton and Leibniz at each other's throats). A century later there were yet more disputes, involving Carnot, Joule, and Helmholtz, about the relationship between work, heat, and energy. You do not find the conservation law in the form of the equation that was tossed at my daughter until the 1860s. And as an aside, it is a pretty silly place to start in explaining anything about the pendulum, since energy depends on mass, and Galileo asserted, right at the beginning, that the period and the velocity of the pendulum are independent of its mass.

Such dogmatic, stupid teaching not only loses bright children to science. It also means that the ones who remain have been spoon-fed a bunch of results and techniques with no understanding of how they were hammered out, of what their birth pangs were. This disqualifies students from understanding the epistemology of science, and therefore of engaging effectively with doubters and deniers, whether the issue is one of the age of the earth or the measurement of its temperature. Either they go off science with a shudder, or (if they stick with it) they know only to mock anyone who cannot see why, for instance, energy might not be proportional to velocity, without themselves knowing why. Or they suppose that science speaks with one voice, and the only dissenters must be Luddites such as the notorious Cardinal Bellarmine, who allegedly refused to look through Galileo's telescope, whereas the truth is that many of Galileo's assertions, including those about the pendulum, were contested by careful observers, including Descartes and Mersenne, probably the leading physicists of the time. And if peoples' miseducation in science has simply taught them to be dogmatists, they can hardly complain if those on the outside can see only dogmatism. But the reality is that science is a human activity, not an abstract calculus, and this properly makes its great achievements a subject of pride and awe, not suspicion and skepticism. It should also make us aware of its desperate fragility, and the hostile cultural forces that it constantly has to overcome.

Midnight Feeding

The open shed on the lawn's far side stinks of gas
from the hateful mower that pulls me where it wants
when I mow, which is seldom. I rip up grass.
Humid night's moon's nothing-halo; the lawn pretends
to candy floss. Black-white dud roses dead since June,
alive enough to scratch my bare legs. I'm wearing nothing
but underpants, flipflops. Arms full, I stumble out,
flashlight in my mouth, turn my head to choose
what's lit. Inside the dirt-floor shed, I fill bowls:
Dry bits, tuna slop. The flashlight hurts my mouth
till I drop it, dwindles into its cone where it falls to blight
a denticular leaf.
"Raphael! Gabriel! Lucifer!" Feral
kittens come running, vicious, filthy. Hum of the road.
Uriel shines his reflector-eyes from among mower parts
in the shed's darkest corner. Disgust shakes his paw.
He won't get close since wild La Mamma ran off weeks ago.
My three-month daughter cries on the baby monitor
I wear like a Miss America sash. She'll wait,
Uriel must eat. Can't leave them. Coons or coyotes
would get the food and kittens too. My fur rises
on my arms. What a bad mom! Also, I refuse
to look at the stars. There are too many
stars in poems you have to get drunk to write.

DAISY FRIED

The questions of truth, faith, and evidence loom large in the more philosophical of these essays. On the first, Sokal accepts a version of what has become known as the "no miracles" argument for science's claim to depict reality truly. This starts with some uncontested fact about the success of a science, such as its accuracy of prediction, or its technological application. Our lasers and our cell phones work, our materials have their calculated strengths, our predictions are borne out to extraordinary numbers of decimal places: what can explain this, except that we are getting things right, or very nearly right? Or in other words, that we are on the track of the truth? If we were not, it would be an inexplicable coincidence—a miracle—that we are so often so successful.

The argument is powerful, and I accept it. But it is not the end of the story. For we need also to wonder what it is about truth that makes it compelling. Consider any instance of scientific success. A GPS receiver tells you where you are with astonishing accuracy, based on its distance from four or more satellites orbiting the earth. How does it know those distances? It uses a time differential and the speed of light. For simplicity's sake, let us consider only the speed of light. What, then, explains the instrument's accuracy? Science says that the speed of light is so many meters per second, and that is the correct, or the true, value. It is the truth

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of the estimate that is vital to the working. If we had gotten it wrong, and not by much, the instrument would be useless.

Here truth is in the shop window, as it were. But the curious thing is that we can suggest the identical explanation without mentioning truth at all. Pick up the story right at the end. What explains the instrument's accuracy? Science says that the speed of light is so many meters per second, and that is true, or science says that the speed of light is so many meters per second and the speed of light is so many meters per second. The second makes no mention of truth, but it works just as well to explain our success. Indeed, it has some title to being science's own explanation of it, and that it is the best that there is. Science does not typically mention the concept of truth in describing how GPS devices work.

It is a queer thing about truth that it has this self-effacing quality. And it is not as if we have to choose which of the explanations should be preferred, the one with truth in the shop window or the one without it. They come to exactly the same thing. Many philosophers, myself included, think that this implies that the notion has a logical, rather than a metaphysical, function. A large claim such as "science gives us the truth" would be a summary way of collecting together a lot of examples such as "science says that cholera is due to a virus, and it is" and "science says that the earth circles the sun, and it does." Since we all assent to many such examples, we can summarize our confidence by assenting to the generalization as well.

If truth retires into the shadows as an interesting topic, so do its detractors. Rorty's campaign careens off the rails, because whether there were once dinosaurs is one thing, and whether our peers let us get away with saying so is patently something else. But evidence can occupy some of the vacuum left by any more substantive conception of truth. The problem with flat-earthers, creationists, homeopaths, and the rest is not so much that they have a duff conception of truth as that they have duff attitudes toward evidence. The problem with creationists, for example, is that they either know nothing about stratigraphical or radiometric dating of geological time, or they misunderstand them, or at the worst they have some fanciful notion that uniformities in nature are not the things to rely upon, in which case they might as well believe that they themselves and their sacred books were all created at the same time, say a couple of minutes ago.

If we cannot take what is uniformly the case within our experience as our guide for hypotheses about regions of the world beyond it, then reasons dissolve and all bets are off. Reliance on such regularity, as Hume saw, is necessary if we are to move one step beyond the immediately given; and in fact, as Kant added, it is necessary in order to think of ourselves as inhabiting a world at all. It is a necessary presupposition of thought itself. So when the creationist arbitrarily strays from relying on regularities, he must be betraying the very reasoning that he himself constantly uses.

The word "faith" raises its annoying head at this point. Is the human reliance on uniformities just as much a matter of faith as the creationist's reliance on whatever message tells him that the earth is six thousand years old? A lot of modern writing in the theory of knowledge more or less throws in the towel and supposes that it is. Wittgenstein summed it up in his last book, *On Certainty*, arguing that what we would like are rock-solid foundations for our beliefs, but what we find are things that simply "stand fast" for us—and this raises the disturbing possibility of others for whom different and in our eyes deplorable things equally stand fast.

This is really only a rediscovery of Hume's own results. But "faith" is the wrong word here, if it implies cousinship with arbitrary stabs of confidence in things for which there is no evidence. Those can, and must, be avoided, because a modest confidence in the wonderful stabilities of the world goes with our capacity to think at all.

In these fundamental ways, then, the history and philosophy of science provide the most important defenses that our culture has. It is excellent to see a practicing physicist taking them seriously and contributing to them, as Alan Sokal has done. He is certainly to be envied for having his name indelibly tied to one of the more interesting battles that has been won on their behalf. ◆

David Shulman
THE ARROW AND THE POEM

Toward the end of the *Sakuntala*, the most famous of the three surviving plays by Kalidasa—the poet usually considered the finest in ancient India—the hero Dushyanta offers this poignant self-analysis:

> Like someone staring at an elephant
> who says, "There is no elephant here,"
> and who then, as it moves away,
> feels a certain doubt
> and later, seeing its footprints,
> is certain: "An elephant
> *has* been here"—
> such are the subtle
> workings of my mind.

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Or of any mind—the rueful king speaks for all of us. We almost always miss the elephant in front of us. By the time we make our retrospective deduction from the footprints, it's usually too late.

Dushyanta is describing the results of a self-inflicted trauma. There was a woman whom he loved more than a man has ever loved a woman; but for various reasons that have a lot to do with the above-mentioned elephant, when Sakuntala, this beloved woman who is pregnant with Dushyanta's child, turns up in the royal court, the king fails to remember who she is. Some might say that this lapse is paradigmatic of men generally. In any case, for the rest of the play Dushyanta gives voice to his sorrow, his guilt, and his hopeless longing in some of the most lyrical verses in world literature.

If Kenneth Branagh can make a compelling modern film of *Hamlet* and Trevor Nunn can produce a miraculously contemporary *Twelfth Night*, someone can surely produce a film version of the *Sakuntala*, using Kalidasa's text verbatim in a good poetic translation. (Perhaps one of the fine contemporary Indian directors, say Adur Gopalakrishnan, should do it in one of India's spoken languages.) But it will be a long wait before this happens, and so we would be wise in the meantime to search for a clean, readable, modern translation

David Shulman is Renee Lang Professor of Humanistic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His book, Spring, Heat, Rains: A South Indian Diary will be published by University of Chicago Press this fall.

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of this great play—and not only of it, but of all the great classics in Sanskrit, the ancient language that shaped Indian civilization. Sanskrit literature, taken as a whole, is—it seems almost ridiculous to have to say this—a surpassing cultural achievement, like ancient Greek literature (though the Sanskrit corpus is, at a conservative estimate, a thousand times larger than what has survived in Greek), and like the literary monuments in classical Chinese or classical Arabic, to say nothing of comparatively young literatures such as we find in English, German, French, or Russian. The astonishing fact is that cultivated readers of the latter tongues may have never heard of Kalidasa, or of the no less important Bhavabhuti, Bharavi, Magha, and Sriharsha.

Happily, help has now arrived. In the last decade, a new library of translations from Sanskrit has begun to appear. It is called the Clay Sanskrit Series, named after the generous donor who has made it all possible, John P. Clay, who took a degree in Sanskrit from Oxford University many years ago. More than thirty volumes have already appeared in this extraordinary project, with another twenty or more in the pipeline. And so, for the first time in English, we have the beginnings of a representative canon of Sanskrit literary works, for the most part well translated and accessible to a wide public.

The Clay volumes are patterned after the justifiably celebrated Loeb Classical Library for Greek and Latin: small, elegant books, beautifully printed, sparsely annotated, and bilingual—the Sanskrit, transliterated into Roman characters in a system devised by the Clay editors, sits on the left page, facing the English translation on the right. This arrangement naturally delights students of Sanskrit, who may dispense, at least temporarily, with their dictionaries and grammar books; but you do not have to know Sanskrit to enjoy reading these volumes. Indeed, their raison d'être is to win for the Sanskrit classics an audience outside India, and certainly beyond the limited scholarly circles that have, for the last two centuries or so, studied these works, produced critical editions and philological commentaries, and sometimes also translated them into Western languages, almost invariably badly.

The sheer awfulness of most earlier translations from Sanskrit can help to explain the profound ignorance of Sanskrit literature among Western readers. What is not easy to explain is why the standard of acceptable translation was, from the very beginning, set so low—in marked contrast, for example, to translations from classical Chinese and Japanese. A part of the trouble no doubt stems from the particular difficulties of Sanskrit—its forbidding morphology, its fondness for extraordinarily lengthy nominal compounds, its vast lexicon, its daunting syntax, and above all its somewhat exotic, or in any case distinctive, world of thought and imagination.

Sanskrit may always have attracted just the kind of fussy, pedantic minds that make for the worst possible translators. They produced versions of Sanskrit poetry that were hardly likely to entice: "Shall I set in motion moist breezes by (means of) cool lotus-leaf-fans which-removed languor? Or placing thy feet, brown as the lotus, O round-thighed (maiden), in (my) lap shall I rub them soothingly?" That, believe it or not, is another verse from the play by Kalidasa that I mentioned at the start. The translator, Sir Monier Monier-Williams, held the Boden Chair in Sanskrit at Oxford during the second half of the nineteenth century, and he famously produced one of the major dictionaries for the language, still very much in use. But clearly, like most people, he had no idea how to translate.

Sadly, the vast majority of translations from Sanskrit poetry into European languages—with a few honorable exceptions, among them Peter Khoroche's outstanding translation of Aryasura's *Jataka-mala*, a set of stories about the Buddha's previous lives—offer the same off-putting mélange of hyperliteralism, barbaric diction, and hackneyed confabulations of honey-soaked lotuses and plump female thighs. But the Clay translators have set out to change all this, and most of the new volumes do succeed in conveying—for the first time in English—something of the toughness and the elegance of Sanskrit at its best. Listen, for example, to Isabelle Onians's rendering of an exciting moment in Dandin's seventh-century novella *What Ten Young Men Did*:

> One day, when I was tenderly giving Raga-manjari little drinks to pacify her love piques, I continued drinking in sips of liquor delivered up in love from her mouth, one after another. Intoxication had me in its grasp. It is traditional that drunkenness and overexcitement make one lose the plot even in one's habitual actions. Which is why, as my madness mounted, I announced:
>
> "In just one night I am going to reduce this city to poverty and fill your house with riches!"
>
> My darling was deeply distressed, but I paid no heed to her prostrations, protestations, and imprecations. I was like a rutting elephant breaking free of my chains. Rather ill-equipped, I charged forth at top speed with a sword as my companion. . . .
>
> Without thinking, I fought off the city police who happened to cross my path. Crying thief, they began to beat me, but I did not lose my temper completely. I only struck down two or three playfully with my sword before it fell from my hand, feeble with drunkenness, and I fell myself, my vision a crimson whirlpool.

Dandin's full-blooded heroes and heroines—mordant, passionate, self-ironic—should easily disabuse anyone of the romantic notion that classical India was a world set up for soppy spiritual exercises. And consider the following lecture, from the same work, offered by a courtesan to a hopelessly innocent sage intent on liberating his soul from the bonds of worldly suffering:

> As for pleasure, it is the particular sensation of supreme bliss between a man and a woman focused entirely on sense objects. Its context is everything that is gorgeous and splendiferous in the world. And its reward: the highest joy, born from mutual friction, sweet to remember, increasing one's self-respect, perfect manifest bliss, and only experienced in and by oneself. It is for the sake of this pleasure alone that distinguished men perform gruesome mortifications, give enormous gifts, fight horrific battles, make terrifying sea voyages, and so on and so on.

Not surprisingly, the sage rapidly undergoes a far-reaching existential transformation and begins "to act like a man in love, renouncing all desire for independent action, and disconsolate if without her for even a moment."

Western readers who happen to know something about India's ancient literature tend to recognize the titles of the two great Sanskrit epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, both apparently composed—if that is the right word—sometime in the last centuries B.C.E. and the early centuries C.E. (This fuzziness in dating, unthinkable in China or the Mediterranean world, is perfectly normative for classical India. We are lucky if we can identify the century, more or less, in which a great poet may have lived.)

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Both are large-scale works that helped to articulate the major tensions and ideals of an entire civilization, and to offer compelling models for identification and action on the part of ordinary people.

Both the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are, not surprisingly, integral parts of the Clay Sanskrit Library. Since the *Mahabharata* is so vast—some 100,000 verses—its volumes are appearing in the series piecemeal, and we must hope that the Clay project lasts long enough to complete the entire set: the Indian tradition tells us that the text is so powerful, and potentially so destructive, that is positively dangerous to attempt to translate it, or even to read it, from beginning to end. Copies of the work are often kept outside the house, on a porch or in some other relatively safe repository, lest it set the home on fire.

When the Clay edition of the *Mahabharata* volumes is finally published, it will be the first time that the whole great epic will be available in readable English. (There is an earlier Indian translation associated with the publisher P. C. Roy, in what is today a quaint dialect perhaps distantly related to English. The University of Chicago Press embarked on a full translation some decades ago, but the prime translator, J. A. B. van Buitenen, died about a third of the way through the text.) And the Clay series is also reprinting the good *Ramayana* translation, in seven volumes, that Princeton University Press has been publishing since the mid-1980s. When friends going to India for the first time ask me what they should read in preparation, I always tell them: begin with the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. They are the keys that open the doors. Travelers will now be able to carry the lightweight, handsome Clay volumes in their handbags, if handbags are still allowed on planes.

One of the most attractive features of the Clay series is a certain adventurousness in selection. By virtue of its visibility, this project will put in place a new canon of classical Sanskrit works to be integrated into the honors lists of "great books" and thus taught in university courses, stumbled upon in good bookshops, and devoured by bold and curious readers in far-flung places with decent libraries. Let me explain. The *Ramayana* is considered by the tradition to be the *adi-kavya*, the first finely crafted, linguistically elevated, and fully autonomous long poem in its language. Its author, Valmiki, was moved to utter poetry—an unconscious, spontaneous eruption—by the grief that he felt on seeing a bird, happily playing with its mate, shot down by a cruel hunter; and this notion of the traumatic origins of art competes in the Indian tradition with other, later images and theories, including one centered on the apparent drive toward ecstatic self-expression on the part of the goddess of music and poetry, Sarasvati, who inspires human poets.

In any case, the *Ramayana* inaugurated the millennia-long production of large-scale masterworks in the intensified, incandescent language of the royal courts and the great Brahminical temples—both of those institutions serving as prominent sites for classical theatrical performances, for example. Thus we have already in the second century C.E. a deeply moving poetic biography of the Buddha, the *Buddhacarita*, by Asvaghosha (translated here by Patrick Olivelle). Asvaghosha also composed one of the most engaging of all Sanskrit literary works, "Handsome Nanda" (well translated for the Clay series by Linda Covill), which tells the almost tragic story of how the Buddha's brother Nanda was tricked into leaving his fetching young wife and kidnapped, or seduced, by promoters of the rather more austere joys of Nirvana. In subsequent centuries—including the period of the imperial Guptas, which lasted from the fourth to the sixth century C.E., usually considered the acme of classicism in north India—we find an immense production of plays, long narrative poems, prose romances such as Bana's great *Princess Kadambari* (which will be translated by David Smith), anthologies of fairy tales, adventure stories, and tall tales such as Somadeva's *The Ocean of the Rivers of Story* (translated by James Mallinson), gnomic fables (*Friendly Advice*, translated by Judit Törzsök), satires, love poems and erotica, mystical allegories, and much more.

The texts universally acknowledged as great are for the most part included in this series; but the editors have also ventured out into lesser-known domains of Sanskrit literature to include works such as Bhanudatta's "Bouquet of Rasa" and "River of Rasa" (translated by Sheldon I. Pollock, the American scholar who has overall responsibility for the series) and Jinaratna's exquisite *Epitome of Queen Lilavati* (R. C. C. Fynes, in two volumes), from one of the major heterodox traditions opposed to Brahminical religion. Such little-known classics have been redeemed by these translations from the limbo that they have always inhabited outside of India and, to some extent, even within the Indian mainstream.

Sadasiva Worshipped by Parvati, c. 1690, Western Panjab Hills

COURTESY PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART

It is difficult, of course, to bring a Sanskrit verse alive in English on the printed page. One always has to remember that these ancient works were invariably intended for oral recitation and performance. "Recitation" means singing, and not the declamatory style that has, for mysterious reasons, established itself as standard for English and indeed for most European poetry in our time. India is a civilization that even today has not lost the sense of the charged, mantic force of the well-spoken word or syllable. In the south of the subcontinent, in languages such as Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam, this innate power of poetic language is so great that entire cultures have organized themselves around it, and gone to extraordinary lengths to create institutional arenas in which it could do its work.

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I am sure that the translators in this series have all experienced first-hand the magic of Sanskrit poetry in a live setting—for example, as a verse emerges from the lips of one of the sensitive Pandit scholars who embody the tradition (and who usually know many of its classics by heart). Such omniscient connoisseurs are becoming rarer in modern India, but you can still meet them in out-of-the-way towns and villages as well as in the great centers such as Varanasi, Mysore, and Pune. Typically, as with any superb poetry, a sung Sanskrit verse issuing into an interactive space will produce an immediate, physical effect on the listener:

> An arrow shot by an archer
> or a poem made by a poet
> should cut through your heart,
> jolting the head.
> If it doesn't, it's no arrow,
> it's no poem.

That is Nannecoda, a Telugu poet from the turn of the second millennium. He would have recognized a kindred soul in Isaac Babel, who has the hero of his story "Guy de Maupassant" remark that "no iron can stab the heart with such force as a full stop put just at the right place."

If you take this principle to its logical conclusion, you will have plays such as Bhavabhuti's *Rama's Last Act* (from the eighth century), here beautifully translated by Sheldon Pollock. I think the playwright aimed, by linguistic as well as trans-linguistic means, to make God—that is, Rama, incarnating the ancient deity Vishnu—present on the stage. I am not sure that any such theophany will occur if the play is read (and silently at that) in English, but I am not sure that it won't, either. Sanskrit theoreticians of poetry had their own ways of explaining the kind of transformation that should overtake you when you hear a poem or see a play. They tended to think that the artistic medium allows for self-transcendence, the momentary shedding of our natural egoistic concerns—and, as a result, a strangely delicious self-coincidence, or a connectedness to deeper, innate levels of our being; but their point of departure was the less grandiose and more empirical observation that when you leave the theater after a good performance, you are not the same person you were when you went in. This was as true in ninth-century Kashmir as it is (or should be) true today.

Given this sense of the deeper reaches of Sanskrit literature, I recommend that readers approach these volumes with something more than the contemplative intellection that is, I fear, our natural default when we open a new book—especially one from a culture very distant from our own. Sanskrit poetry also offers endless food for thought. There are the brilliant *aperçus* of Kshemendra, the Kashmiri polymath of the eleventh century; the psychological insightfulness of Bana and of Kalidasa; the penetrating metaphysical intuitions of Asvaghosha and Bhartrihari (fifth century). It would be easy to go on in this celebratory vein. But at its best a Sanskrit poem says, and does, much more than what it seems to be saying. Here, again, is Bhavabhuti, a word-necromancer with strong philosophical inclinations, as he reaches toward a definition of human love:

> That state when two become one
> in joy as in sorrow,
> where you find rest together
> and feelings never age
> but deepen and ripen as you move
> through the layers of time,
> that rare state of human fullness
> is real. You *may* find it, once,
> in life.

This is no simple, abstract enunciation of a reason to be hopeful. If you have not been flooded by the fullness he is "describing" as you read or, better, sing the verse, then you have not actually heard it, or maybe you cannot hear it. I am not sure anyone can hear it, fully, in English.

Bhavabhuti puts the words in the mouth of Rama, that is, God himself, in a wistful mood that precedes his greatest act of cruelty. The educated reader knows that Rama is just about to drive his innocent and beloved wife Sita into exile. The play will take us through the many stages of remorse, self-delusion, and inescapable blindness that this god has to undergo before he gets his beloved back. And we, the spectators, are there in order to help him to get her back.

Please do not misunderstand. I am the last to put forward a mystical protocol for reading Sanskrit literature. In fact, given a choice, I naturally gravitate to the skeptics, and I am rather inclined to intellection myself. All I am suggesting is that when you pick up a book like Bhavabhuti's *Rama's Last Act*, you try to let its intimate, subtle tones and voices do their work, in and out of the mind. At least at moments it should feel something like the way Bhavabhuti's hero, Rama, describes the happy nights he spent with Sita in the wilderness:

> Whispering wonderful whatevers
> in any which order,
> cheek touching cheek,
> arms totally enmeshed
> from so much loving,
> we never knew the hours passing
> when suddenly—night itself
> was over.

Of course, not everyone goes in for intimate whatevers as their holiday or bedtime reading, let alone for their course assignments in World Literature 101. There will be those who prefer the hard-nosed tone of Bhallata's bitter allegories, as in the following verse from Somadeva Vasudeva's fine translation of Sanskrit satires:

> Ah, good tree! Why were you born at
> a crossroad?
> Why did you have to be rich in shade?
> Being rich in shade, why did you bear
> fruit?
> Being laden with burdens of fruit,
> why did you have to bow down?
> Suffer now, for your own misdeeds,
> my friend,
> as people drag, shake,
> bend, and break the tips of your
> branches.

Here is a lucid voice from late-ninth-century Kashmir. It does not take much effort to decipher the coded message. Altruists and donors, beware! The Sanskrit original is, not surprisingly, even more pointed and lyrical. No whispers there.

For that matter, who among us would fail to recognize himself or herself in another of Bhallata's sardonic examples?

> It is no big deal
> that the fool mistook the water drop
> on the lotus leaf for a pearl.
> Hear more about him:
> As he gently picked it up
> it dissolved by the slight motion
> of his fingertip.
> "Where has it flown to?"
> Now, every day, he cannot sleep with
> inner grief.

Probably many of our losses, and our sleepless nights, are the issue of such tiny droplets.

These are but a few of the riches that this important new collection opens up for the adventurous reader. I hope there will be many such readers, from all over the globe. And so I suppose I should also be clear about a few warnings of a general nature.

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First of all, inevitably, not all the translations are of the same high level. One or two are positively unacceptable. And as in the Loeb volumes, the Clay translators often tend to the plain and the literal, with consequent flattening effects on the usually sparkling originals. I doubt that this was part of the instructions given to the translators, but it is hard not to notice a certain leveling. Also, the introductions to the first twenty or so volumes in the series are at best skimpy; the reader is very much on his or her own with the translated text and the translator's annotation, which is in some cases quite rich and in other cases minimal. This parsimony in introducing the texts has been corrected in more recent volumes—for example, in Pollock's very interesting introduction to Bhavabhuti.

One truly problematic editorial decision was the recommendation that translators reproduce double-entendre phrases or verses—one of the special effects of Sanskrit poetry, taken at times to astonishing lengths—by the awkward graphic device of two-tier italics-cum-modified colon. The result, evident on page after page, is that verses are sometimes reduced to a sort of lunatic babble in place of the complex but still limpid original:

> Take from here
> the priceless scent of the sandal trees
> and leave the forests of Malaya's
> foothills
> quickly enough for these selfish snakes
> enjoying amorous frolics
> not to
> *use their hoods to:*
> *pretend that you are their food and*
> drink you in gulp by gulp.

This is from Dhoyi's "Wind Messenger," from twelfth-century Bengal, in which a lovesick girl asks the wind to deliver an imagined message to her distant royal lover. Such messenger poems belong to a major genre pioneered, again, by Kalidasa. I suppose that with a lot of good will and patience, a certain adeptness at imaginative exercise, and the help of the translator's laconic note ("Snakes are said to eat air"), an innocent reader might actually be able to figure out what this verse says. But really there is no excuse for this kind of failure. Even elaborate bi-textual double entendres—or *slesha*, as they are called in Sanskrit—are amenable to translation if you work at it. Some of the translators have found ingenious solutions, which are, after all, what is minimally required.

Still, these occasional lapses hardly detract from a cultural enterprise of the first order, and on a monumental scale. Here is a chance—actually, many varied chances—to go beyond the surface images of a romanticized India and to touch something real. By "real," I mean complex, dissonant, unexpected, vivid, concrete, confusing, opaque, unsettling—all these elementary things. It's a bit like going to India for the first time, or the twentieth. There is also the sense of entering into cultural settings that are put together very differently from the ones familiar to us—alternative worlds, driven by experiences and ideas integral to their distinctive systems, informed by a logic of their own. To fail to know them, or at least to taste them, even if only in translation, is to constrict, for no good reason and unbearably, the core of our own humanity.

You can also, if you read the books in something like chronological order, put these worlds together historically, following the development of the classical Sanskrit poets from the inspired geniuses of the epics (and before that, of the ancient Vedic literature) to the highly professional and sophisticated craftsmen of the early medieval courts, with their ideal of *ullekhana*—a polished perfection, seen as a completely human achievement that comes from refining and intensifying language to a pitch perhaps unique among the literatures of the world. (Readers who seek an overview of the literary and cultural history of Sanskrit should immediately repair to Sheldon Pollock's extraordinary and pioneering book *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*.) You can also see how later poets channeled this heightened expressive power into very personal, often iconoclastic modes, using Sanskrit to reflect back on itself and its long tradition. Here, for example, is the thirteenth-century philosopher-poet Vedanta Desika, from the Tamil south, singing of his sorrow to the living goddess whom he names "Compassion" (the poem comes from one of the still unpublished volumes in the series, by Yigal Bronner and myself):

> Take all those classical poets—
> from Valmiki on.
> They came all the way up
> to a vast ocean of experience,
> the experience that is you,
> but they never even dipped their toes.
> Compassion: shouldn't you pay me
> some attention? *I* jumped in,
> I can't touch bottom,
> I'm drowning, and God
> sits there smiling.

You know the feeling. In this case it is what gives Vedanta Desika an edge over his illustrious predecessors. To feel the full force of the verse, you would do well to read Valmiki's *Ramayana*, and then something of Asvaghosha and Kalidasa, and then maybe Bhavabhuti or another one of the great innovators, such as Bharavi or Magha or the exotic maverick Murari. Then see what a bold and eloquent poet such as Vedanta Desika has done with his immense poetic inheritance.

Lately there has been some talk of closing down the Clay series after the publication of the fiftieth volume, scheduled for next year. This would be a disaster, leaving many masterpieces languishing, unfinished or unpublished. We must hope that a way will be found to allow this visionary enterprise to go on. For a whole library, a whole literature, hot off the press, is now at last open and available to readers of English. It is more than two hundred years since Goethe remarked, after reading some very inadequate translations, that all earthly beauty is condensed into Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*. Was he exaggerating? Now you can make up your own mind. ◆

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Washington Diarist

Dread of Winter

The problem with *The New Yorker*'s Obama bin Laden cover was owed to a certain confusion about the moral status of wit. The image was the creation of people for whom there is almost nothing more mortifying than not being in on the joke. *That* is the bridge and tunnel of the soul. So it is worth interjecting that the duty to get a joke is always followed by the duty to judge a joke. More, it is possible to get a joke and to hate it. I make such jokes often: I wish to be funny because I wish to offend. *The New Yorker* wishes to be funny but it does not wish to offend. No, that's not fair. It is prepared to offend Dick Cheney. But now its urbanity has backfired and it has offended Barack Obama, than which there is no greater blasphemy. (The really fine transgression took place in Ryan Lizza's disenchanted study of Obama's cunning, which was smothered by the too-cool-for-school cover.) There was some amusement to be had in the magazine's appeal in its defense to its politics, as if progressivism is proof against insularity, and not itself an insulation. Still, my brothers and sisters at *The New Yorker* were not guilty of the week's worst. Didn't anybody see *Newsweek*'s cover? It consisted in a close-up of Obama praying, or in an attitude of prayer—his head on his clasped hands, his eyes closed, his brow gently furrowed by faith—a head shot by Memling. "What He Believes," intoned the caption above his holy ear. This devotional portrait marked another stage in the transformation of *Newsweek* into *Commonweal*, though in this instance religious credulity was accompanied by political credulity. Why is the religiosity of Barack Obama less deserving of liberal distaste than the religiosity of George W. Bush? I mean, Jesus is Jesus. And in an open society, which places an extraordinary intellectual burden upon ordinary men and women, and cannot fulfill its democratic purpose without the ceaseless encouragement of habits of critical thought in its citizens, surely blasphemy is better than idolatry.

But there are people beyond the glossy metropolis who have a proper claim on our pity, and for reasons that have nothing to do with the forms and meanings of satire. All thinking persons must agree that the costliness of oil is good news, because it will bring us to our senses and we will allow the market to get to work on more plentiful and less damaging sources of energy. Our epicene relationship with energy will be economically refuted. Crises are opportunities, after all. Greening is a way of learning to take the long view. Is there any standpoint more "macro" than the evaluation of human affairs from the perspective of the planet? And so I frequently detect, in the excitement of some energy-and-environment writers about the social revolution at the pump, a certain carelessness about the near-term, a technocrat's or revolutionist's insouciance about immediate consequences. They are more exercised by strategy than by relief. But there are many Americans who are living this summer in a dread of winter. They are urban, suburban, and rural. They are poor and they are old. Before they will be green, they will be cold. For these people, this is a crisis before it is an opportunity. Is compassion insufficiently visionary? I was taught that there is nothing more visionary than a just society. In *The New York Times* a few weeks ago, John Leland wrote a haunting report on the impact of gasoline prices upon the elderly in Michigan and elsewhere, and it left me wondering why we must choose between "macro" and "micro," between strategy and relief. Is there no politics in America that can contain them both? If it is true that social policy is not energy policy, it is no less true that energy policy is not social policy. Except, of course, for those whose philosophy demands that they make it so: the president, for example, who did his Dickensian best to reduce federal money—now!—for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. There are many Republicans for whom the advocates of low-income assistance are sentimentalists who fail to grasp that a society is not built on its losers. But it is not the losers—a disgraceful way to describe the helpless, but they are used to it—who stand in the way of rationality and decency in our energy policy. It is the winners—the oil companies and the car companies, full stop; and in the dissipation of the Bush government they enjoy high-income assistance. As Robert Solow recently remarked in these pages, "asking the truly disadvantaged to take the long view is both unrealistic and unjust."

The losers in contemporary America conspicuously include the old, or the no longer young; and in a country in which the addiction to newness is even greater than the addiction to petroleum, this is as much a laxity of culture as a laxity of economics. I am not old, but I am not young. I have been watching with bafflement and disgust the "buy-outs" at major American newspapers, which are subsidized purges (better than unsubsidized ones, I know) of memory and judgment and all the other qualities that cannot be acquired without time. I recognize that younger journalists are cheaper and hipper, if hipness denotes an inability to distinguish between writing and posting. But why would intellectual institutions—I quaintly persist in counting newspapers among them—chop off their own heads? A few days ago I opened *The Washington Post*, the paper version, the one I will never give up, and found a mocking piece about the anxieties of the baby boomers, who "have once again spoken [and] what they have said is '*Waaaaaahhh.*'" We are, it asserted, "a bunch of whiners." I will not rise to defend my generation, because we have made a muck of many things, and because we do linger long over ourselves, and because the analysis of life in generational terms is idiotic. Every generation holds every variety of individual. But I will not be given lessons in self-abnegation from Facebookers. The history of vanity has never seen anything quite like them. And I must morbidly warn them that connectivity will not protect them from the way of all flesh. When they come to bury a father or a friend, when their beauty begins to wither and their vigor to wane, when they awake one morning to the fear that they may have more to look back on than to look forward to—when the inevitabilities poke them, may their eight hundred "friends" stand them in good stead. I promise not to call their shudders whines. For if spring comes, can winter be far behind?

Leon Wieseltier

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